

Royal Decrees appoint advisors to King

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued Saturday appointing HRH Prince Talal Ben Mohammad as His Majesty King Abdullah's advisor for national security affairs, in addition to his current post as rapporteur of the State Security Council. Another decree was issued appointing Abdullah Baheddin Touqan as King Abdullah's advisor for scientific affairs and deputy rapporteur of the State Security Council. According to the decrees, effective as of Feb. 2, both Prince Talal and Touqan will enjoy the rank and salary of a minister. A third decree was issued yesterday appointing Faisal Akef Fayz as chief of Royal Protocol at the Royal Court as of March 3.

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**More than 200,000
pilgrims now in
S. Arabia for Haj**

RIYADH (R) — Saudi Arabia said on Saturday that more than 200,000 Muslims from all over the world had already arrived in the kingdom to perform the annual Haj pilgrimage. The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) quoted the head of the passports department as saying that a total of 202,430 pilgrims arrived by air, 3,035 by sea and others by land. About two million Muslims perform the Haj pilgrimage, a pillar of the Islamic faith, every year. The pilgrimage falls this year later in March.

**Kidnapped
children freed in
Sierra Leone**

FREETOWN (R) — Rebels in Sierra Leone have released around 30 abducted children, as they promised to do during talks by radio with religious leaders during the week. A senior churchman said on Saturday, "The rebels have just released the 30 children they promised to release as a sign of goodwill that they are sincere about holding talks with the Sierra Leone government to end the war," a Sierra Leone Council of Churches official told Reuters. The government was encouraged by news of the release.

**India, Pakistan
agree to free
detainees**

NEW DELHI (R) — Arch-rivals India and Pakistan have agreed to release a batch of civilian prisoners and fishermen from each other's custody within a month, the United News of India (UNI) said on Saturday. UNI said India would release 43 Pakistani prisoners and 26 fishermen while Pakistan would free 18 Indian prisoners and 109 fishermen under an agreement reached between the two countries. It said the decisions were taken during two days of talks between officials of the home ministries of the two countries which ended in Islamabad on Saturday.

**Azerbaijan says
former CIA agent
advised on plot**

MOSCOW (AP) — The government of Azerbaijan claimed Saturday that a former CIA agent was involved in a plot to assassinate ex-President Abulfaz Elchibey. Authorities last year accused former parliament speaker Rasul Gulyev of plotting the assassination and the national security ministry now claims that he hired the former agent as an advisor. Russian and Azerbaijani news agencies reported. The ministry identified the American as Brian Branson, and said he was a former department head of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the *Itar-Tass* report said. In Washington, CIA spokesman Mark Mansfield said the agency had no comment on the reports.

**Mexican president
orders probe of
governor**

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — President Ernesto Zedillo has called for a probe of allegations Tabasco State Governor Robert Madrazo may be linked to a tax evasion scheme involving up to \$20 million. La Jornada newspaper reported Saturday. Zedillo reportedly issued an order Jan. 14 to investigate the charges against Madrazo, a potential presidential candidate for the ruling party. The Tabasco government allegedly seized tax receipts generated by some 63,000 state workers and illegally used the funds to fuel Madrazo's political aspirations. The paper reported.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published weekly by the Jordan Press Foundation



Four dead, 9 missing in Florida rescue operation

MIAMI (AP) — The Coast Guard rescued three men near south Florida on Saturday after a boat carrying possibly up to 18 Haitians sank during an apparent smuggling attempt. The Coast Guard received a report at 2 a.m. from a freighter crew that heard screams from the water about 30-48 kilometres east of West Palm Beach. At least four people were dead, and the Coast Guard was searching for others. A Coast Guard cutter recovered two dead men, and crew members saw two other dead men sink beneath the water, according to a Coast Guard statement.

Bahrain in mourning over loss of Emir Isa Ben Khalifeh



File photo dated Oct. 30, 1998 of Bahraini Emir Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh attending the opening ceremony of the 14th Gulf Cup Championship in Manama. The emir died of natural causes yesterday (AFP photo)

King to lead delegation to Bahrain to offer condolences

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday expressed his deep sorrow and that of the Jordanian people over the death of Bahraini Emir Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh.

A Royal Court announcement said: "His Majesty King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein mourns with deep grief the passing of the emir of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh."

King Abdullah will lead a high-level delegation to Bahrain today to offer condolences to the Bahraini government.

King Abdullah expressed the grief of the Hashemite family and that of the Jordanian people and government to the Al Khalifeh family and the Bahraini government and people over the passing of one of the leaders of the Arab Nation who dedicated his life to serving his country and nation.

The late emir was known for

declaring himself the new emir under the constitution.

Sheikh Hamad, named crown prince in 1964, was sworn in before the cabinet, the radio said.

Bahrain declared a three-month mourning period and ordered government ministries and institutions closed for five days.

Sheikh Isa came to the throne in 1961 after serving as crown prince from 1958.

Bahrain state radio said Sheikh Hamad informed the cabinet at an emergency meeting of his father's death and told them he

his efforts to end differences among Arab states and to unify the ranks of the Arab Nation.

King Abdullah recalled with deep appreciation the honorable stand of the late emir towards Jordan and the Arab World at large.

The Cabinet Saturday issued a communiqué declaring a seven-day mourning period in Jordan during which flags will fly at half-mast.

Prime Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh expressed deep grief over the passing of Sheikh Khalifeh.

In a statement to the press, Rawabdeh said the late emir had been a great friend of

the late King Hussein and was one of the great leaders of the Arab Nation.

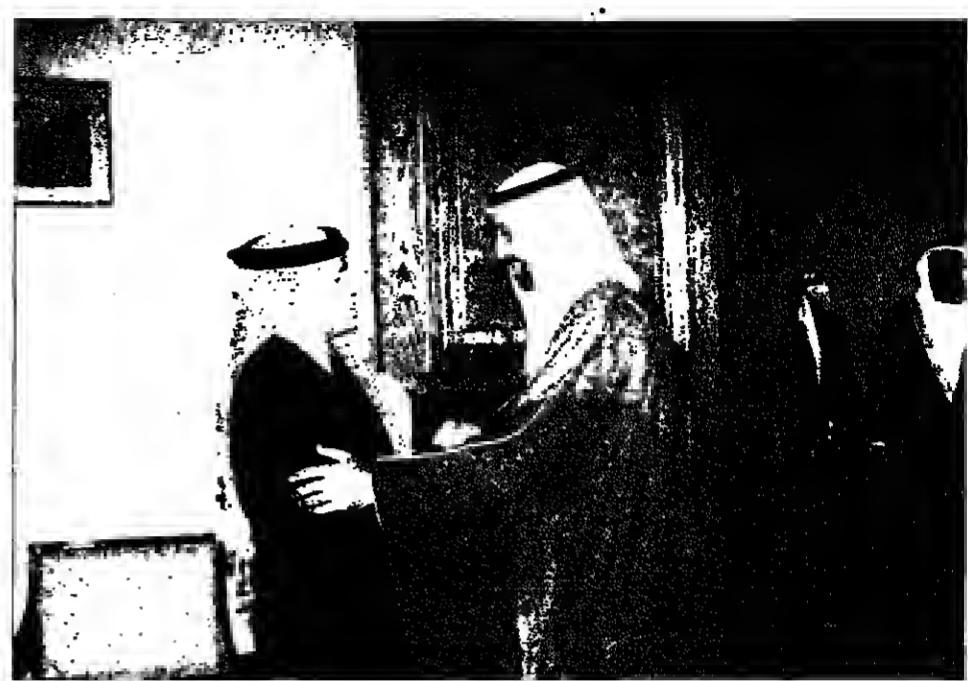
He said the Jordanian people share the sorrow of the ruling family of Bahrain and of the Bahraini people over their great loss.

The prime minister said Jordan's satellite channel will be linked with Bahrain's satellite channel.

In more than 37 years as ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa presided over an economic diversification programme that turned the island state into a major Middle Eastern financial centre.

Bahrain was the first Gulf state to find oil in commercial quantities, in the early 1930s, but it never became a major oil exporter and what reserves it has are dwindling.

Sheikh Isa and his government decided the island's future prosperity could only be assured by transforming the economy.



His Majesty King Abdullah receives the deputy higher commander of the UAE armed forces, Sheikh Sultan Ben Khalifeh Ben Zayed for a meeting on Saturday (Petra photo)

King meets with UAE military official, IAEA chief

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday received the greetings of the UAE armed forces, Sheikh Sultan Ben Khalifeh Ben Zayed, for talks on bilateral issues.

During the meeting, Sheikh Sultan, accompanied by a delegation comprising Minister of Economy and Trade Sheikh Fahem Ben Sultan Qasemi, Central Bank Governor Sultan Nasser Sweidi and the vice president of Abu Dhabi's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said he will hold talks with Jordanian officials on the possibility of establishing a joint company.

King Abdullah expressed deep appreciation for the gesture and for Sheikh Zayed's encouragement of investment in Jordan's development projects and facilitation of joint invest-

ment.

King Abdullah sent his greetings to Sheikh Zayed and Sheikh Khalifeh and wished further progress and prosperity to the people of the UAE.

Earlier, Sheikh Sultan, who delivered greetings from UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khalifeh Ben Zayed Al Nahayan to King Abdullah, stressed his country's desire to boost bilateral relations in all fields.

King Abdullah expressed deep appreciation for the gesture and for Sheikh Zayed's encouragement of investment in Jordan's development projects and facilitation of joint invest-

ment.

Also yesterday, King

Abdullah met the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammad Bardai, for talks on joint relations.

During the meeting, the King stressed Jordan's policy on the elimination of atomic and mass destruction weapons from the region and praised the agency's role in limiting such arms.

Bardai expressed appreciation for the Kingdom's cooperation with the agency in scientific, health and agricultural fields.

He briefed the King on the agency's mission and activities in Iraq.

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khaitib and Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Suleiman Abu Alim attended the meeting.

Qadhafi, Mubarak discuss Lockerbie case in Cairo

CAIRO (R) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak discussed developments in the Lockerbie impasse Saturday in a tent pitched on the presidential palace lawn.

"Certainly, the Lockerbie affair imposed itself," Egyptian Information Minister Sawsan Sherif told reporters after the 45-minute closed-door meeting. "They reviewed the latest contacts and efforts."

"The two leaders also discussed Arab causes, including the Iraq crisis and the Middle East peace process, and bilateral issues," Sherif said.

Qadhafi would hold a news conference at the end of his talks with Mubarak Monday, he said. The Libyan leader is due to leave Egypt Friday.

President sources said the two leaders were due to continue talks at 6 p.m. (1600 GMT) at Inshadaya Palace.

The U.N. Security Council imposed sanctions on Libya in 1992 for failing to hand over

two Libyans accused of planting a bomb on a Pan Am airliner that exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988, killing 270 people.

Qadhafi said Tuesday that "a final agreement is expected" on a U.S.-British plan under which the suspects would be tried under Scottish law in the Netherlands.

Qadhafi, who is using a crutch since he broke his hip last year, stayed the night at an undisclosed location in the desert after coming across the border in a cavalcade of some 200 vehicles Friday.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said in Malta Friday he expected a solution "within the next few weeks" to the lengthy conflict pitting Libya against Britain and the United States.

"There are great prospects for optimism in this question," Musa said at the end of a two-day European-Mediterranean foreign ministers' meeting in Valletta. "There are positive

signs from both sides."

Musa said Libya received a clarifying letter from U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on arrangements for the handing over of the suspects — Al Amin Khalifa Fehima and Abdul Basset Al Megrahi.

"Things are moving and we hope the matter will be finalised in the near future," Musa said. "Egypt wants a solution to this issue and the lifting of sanctions on Libya."

Sanctions, including a ban on flights to and from Libya, would be suspended when the men are flown to the Netherlands.

Qadhafi asked the Libyan people to trust South African President Nelson Mandela and Saudi Arabian officials who "asked us to accept" provisions for the handing over of the two Libyans.

The United States and Britain gave Tripoli an informal 30-day deadline on Feb. 26 to surrender the pair.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak escorts Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi past a honour guard at Kubba Palace in Cairo on Saturday (AP photo)

U.S. planes attack Iraqi sites; several reported injured

INCIRLIK (R) — U.S. F-15E planes dropped laser-guided bombs on five Iraqi anti-aircraft sites Saturday after artillery sites fired at them in the northern no-fly zone after coalition aircraft were threatened by Iraqi missiles.

The bombing came days after Turkey's President Suleyman Demirel criticised U.S. strike damage to an Iraqi pipeline carrying crude oil to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

Although NATO-member Turkey hosts the U.S. planes that patrol and regularly bomb neighbouring northern Iraq, it has expressed uneasiness over long-term U.S. goals in the region.

The U.S. military spokesman said

strikes began after planes patrolling Iraq's northern no-fly zone observed Iraqi anti-aircraft positions firing at them.

A Reuters correspondent travelling in a refuelling aircraft from the airbase said plumes of smoke were visible above snow-capped mountains inside Iraq's border after the strikes.

"What it seems has been happening in the last few days is Iraqis have been changing their positions," a U.S. air force commander at Incirlik airbase told Reuters.

Both Britain and the United States earlier this week expanded the list of targets their pilots are authorised to strike, but insisted there was no change in policy.

"We have simply widened the definition of what a threat system is from a specific system to integrated system and all the things attached to that site," Colonel Bill Gormley told Reuters in Incirlik.

Officials said the Pentagon would later release a full assessment of damage inflicted on Iraqi targets.

Gormley also downplayed the possibility that Iraqi artillery could damage coalition aircraft on patrols.

"The systems they are using and the way they are forced to use them because of our tactics means they have a very low probability of hitting any of our aircraft," he said.

three weeks," he said.

Reaffirming that his government will go to Parliament during its current session for a vote of confidence, Rawabdeh said: "That is a constitutional obligation and the government has no choice."

Parliament's current ordinary session ends at the end of this month.

Marwan Hmoud, the first deputy prime minister, heads the ministerial committee that will prepare the government's statement to the House.

The government also formed the following committees: a higher committee to follow up on Gulf War compensation claims, headed by the prime minister; a committee for water, headed by Rawabdeh; a committee for administrative affairs, led by Deputy Prime Minister Marwan Hmoud; committees for development, privatisation, developing the northern coast of Aqaba, and monitoring the privatisation process of Royal Jordanian, all of which are led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning Rima Khalfaf; a ministerial committee for the Pan-Arab Games led by Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Majali; and a legal committee led by Minister of Justice Hamzeh Hadid.

Rawabdeh said water topped the priorities of his government and said he hoped that "within the coming two weeks we will overcome the water crisis."

He said his government will also immediately address administrative procedures in order to ease bureaucracy. Rawabdeh also said his administration will facilitate domestic and foreign investment.

"Investors should only apply to one department and an official response should not take more than



Palestinian lawmaker Hanan Ashrawi is pushed back by Israeli police and army during a scuffle in the West Bank town of Al Ram on Saturday (Reuters photo)

Palestinian women scuffle with Israeli police in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A Palestinian woman was arrested here Saturday in scuffles with Israeli police at a road block during a demonstration to mark International Women's Day, which falls Monday, witnesses said.

The police broke up the protest by about 150 women, who included former Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi. The demonstrators held a banner addressed to the Israeli authorities reading: "Free our husbands and our sons." Israel is currently holding about 3,000 Palestinian prisoners in its jails.

"This demonstration is also aimed at showing that Jerusalem is the capital of the independent Palestinian state," one of the participants, Faiza Abu Al Heija, said.

Iraqi paper slams Gulf states on Cohen tour

BAGHDAD (R) — An official Iraqi newspaper criticised Arab Gulf states Saturday over Defence Secretary William Cohen's tour to drum up regional support for air attacks in no-fly zones over Iraq.

"He is being received with open arms by the rulers of Saudi Arabia and others to discuss with them America's hostile strategy against Iraq,"

The Iraqi News Agency

against an Arab and Muslim country, Iraq, while he is freely roaming the land of Arabs and Muslims," the official newspaper Al Qadisiya said.

"It is being received with open arms by the rulers of Saudi Arabia and others to discuss with them America's hostile strategy against Iraq,"

INA quoted President Saddam Hussein as accusing the United States and Britain of committing an "aggression against Iraq since December 1998" as the two countries' planes attack air defences in north and south of the country.

Washington and London launched four-day extensive air raids against Iraq in December. Since then Baghdad has been defying two Western-imposed no-fly zones to protect Iraqi Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south from possible attacks from Baghdad.

INA said Saddam's comments came in a letter he sent to a gathering being held in India to oppose U.N. sanctions against Baghdad.

There will also be other activities, such as work-

We will not be lagging behind any steps they take. Our present is one and our future is one, and we are bound by joint security and defence pacts," Sheikh Hamad said in an interview in 1996.

Born on January 28, 1950, Sheikh Hamad was officially appointed crown prince of the small country of 580,000 in 1964. Bahrain's armed forces — under the command of Sheikh Hamad — joined an international alliance led by the United States to help drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in 1991.

He is committed to the alliance with five other Gulf Arab states grouped together under the Gulf Cooperation Council.

"We are a part of our Arab Gulf and we do not outpace our brothers and brethren.

on a small disputed small Gulf island in 1986. Saudi Arabia stepped in to defuse the crisis.

Bahrain and Qatar are locked in a long-standing border dispute over small but potentially oil-rich islands, including Hawar island, located near Qatar's northwestern coast and are controlled by Bahrain since 1930s.

Sheikh Hamad studied in Bahrain and abroad and became a qualified helicopter pilot in 1978.

He had been a permanent member of the Helicopter Club of the Great Britain.

He speaks good English, rides well and water-skis, used to play basketball and football with his soldiers and is fond of tennis and

falconry.

Sheikh Hamad is the eldest son of the late emir, Sheikh Isa. He has three sons, the eldest is Sheikh Salman who was appointed deputy defence minister in 1995, Abdullah and Khalifa and two daughters.

He appears committed to the policies which his deceased father had pursued during 37 years in office.

"It is difficult to go unilateral with frameworks and courses strange to our society whatever the circumstances. On this basis, the course of shura [consultative council] is the one now prevailing in the Gulf Cooperation Council,"

Sheikh Hamad said in the 1996 interview.

New emir of Bahrain, an experienced army commander

MANAMA (R) — Sheikh Hamad Ben Isa Al Khalifa, who succeeded his father who died on Saturday, has built a well-trained army in Bahrain despite the Gulf Arab island's limited financial resources and small population.

Crown prince since 1964, Sheikh Hamad was defence minister and then commander of Bahrain's national guard before the creation of an army force after the island gained independence in 1971 from Britain.

He is committed to the alliance with five other Gulf Arab states grouped together under the Gulf Cooperation Council.

"We are a part of our Arab Gulf and we do not outpace our brothers and brethren.

UNDP to help promote human rights in Iran

TEHRAN (R) — The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is to sponsor academic activities in Iran to help raise awareness on human rights, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported.

Michael Von Der Shulenburg, head of the U.N. office in Tehran, and Mohammad Reza Takshid, the dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Tehran University, signed accords on this on Saturday, the agency said.

The projects, which include introduction of specialised graduate courses on human rights, "seek to promote human rights in Iran by international as well as Islamic standards."

Iran has also been insisting that Western notions of human rights are incompatible with

Islamic teachings, which the country has strictly followed since its 1979 revolution.

But there has been growing debate here on the subject of human rights since Khatami's election 21 months ago.

"The U.N. welcomes the spirit of cooperation the Iranian government is showing. We hope the project will increasingly bring Iran into the global discussion of human rights," Shulenburg was quoted as saying.

Western countries have long accused the Islamic republic of human rights abuses, charges which Iran rejects as politically motivated.

Iran has also been insisting that Western notions of human rights are incompatible with

Ibrahim arrives in Tehran

TEHRAN (AFP) — U.N. special envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Ibrahim arrived here Saturday to discuss the situation in Iran's war-torn neighbour with Iranian officials, the official IRNA news agency said.

During his five-day stay, Ibrahim is also scheduled to hold talks with a visiting delegation from the 54-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) headed by OIC chief Izzedin Laraki, who arrived here Friday.

Ibrahim's visit to Iran, a harsh critic of the Taliban, comes following an agreement between the Sunni Muslim militia and Afghan opposition forces to hold peace talks in Turkmenistan next week.

The U.N. special envoy announced in Islamabad Thursday that the Taliban and its rivals had agreed to hold peace talks in Ashkhabad on March 10.

Ibrahim said the Ashkhabad conference offered the "last chance" for the two sides to arrive at a peaceful settlement.

Ibrahim acknowledged he did not succeed in persuading the Taliban to agree to the formation of a broad-based government of national reconciliation. But he voiced the hope that Afghanistan's neighbours would be able to convince the warring factions to see reason and arrive at a settlement.

On his arrival here, Ibrahim told reporters that aim of his visit is to discuss the "continuation of cooperation for the settlement of the Afghan issue" with Iranian officials.

Qatar scores two 'firsts' with local elections

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar will score two "firsts" for the conservative Gulf Arab monarchies on Monday when it holds local elections with women taking part as both voters and candidates.

The peninsular state has been festooned with banners, portraits of candidates and posters for the election which will set up a single municipal council.

Six women, most of them university academics, are among almost 240 candidates running for seats in the 29-member council, which will

have a four-year mandate.

With 18 as the minimum voting age, the electorate numbers almost 22,000 — including 9,665 women — out of a total population of 522,000 of whom only an estimated 100,000 are Qatari nationals.

Members of the armed forces and police are not on the electoral roll and cannot run for office.

Parliamentary delegations from a dozen Arab and other countries have been invited to supervise the elections, including Faezeh Hashemi, an Iranian MP and daughter of former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"The fact that Qatari women are taking part is an important step toward participation in political life," she told reporters in Doha.

"I wish it could be backed up by an elected parliament, to which it could turn in case of conflict with the executive," said Abdullah Mulla Zain Al Mulla, a senior official of Qatar's central bank.

The emir, Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, announced on Nov. 16 a decision to appoint a committee of experts to draw up a permanent constitution which would

provide for a directly-elected parliament.

Despite the limitations, rival candidates in the municipal contests have promised to open creches, clubs for the elderly and skating rinks, or even to build new homes for voters.

Mullah called on electors to rally behind the women candidates "to ensure the success of this experiment in democracy." But psychology professor at Qatar university and candidate Muza Al Malki insisted that voters be more discerning. "I refuse to be elected just because I'm a woman," she said.

The women candidates have been active in electoral evenings held in tents in the presence of men, an unprecedented event for a country where the sexes are segregated.

But segregation will be strictly enforced during the vote, with separate booths for men and women as well as separate entrances to polling stations, said Colonel Abdulla Al Kabish, who is in charge of security.

Oman is the only other Gulf Arab state to have given

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

05:00 ...Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
05:20 ...Beirut (RJ)

09:35 ...Frankfurt (RJ)

10:50 ...Agaba, Vienna (RJ)

11:25 ...Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)

11:30 ...Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

11:30 ...Rome (RJ)

12:15 ...London (RJ)

12:15 ...Athens (RJ)

19:00 ...Jeddah (add) (RJ)

20:30 ...Jeddah (RJ)

20:35 ...New Delhi (RJ)

21:00 ...Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

21:45 ...Damascus (RJ)

22:45 ...Sanaa (RJ)

23:00 ...Jeddah (add) (RJ)

23:30 ...Bangkok (RJ)

00:35 ...Cairo (RJ)

00:10 ...Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

14:35 ...Istanbul (TK)

18:00 ...Dubai, Damascus (EK)

18:40 ...Beirut (ME)

18:45 ...Kiev (U)

19:05 ...Paris (AF)

20:25 ...Tel Aviv (LY)

20:40 ...Cairo (MS)

23:30 ...London (KL)

23:55 ...Larnaca (CY)

00:55 ...Bucharest (RO)

02:00 ...Rome (AZ)

02:00 ...Rome (AZ)

07:15 ...Beirut, London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

10:30 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 523200 when it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

08:25 Bombay (RJ)

08:35 Jeddah (RJ)

08:50 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

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23:30 ...Bangkok (RJ)

00:35 ...Cairo (RJ)

Albright arrives in London for Kosovo talks

LONDON (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived here Saturday for discussions on Kosovo as criticism of her and U.S. efforts to forge a peace in the troubled Yugoslav province mounted.

Albright, who changed her return flight from a three-nation Asian tour to include the London stop, was to meet former U.S. senator Bob Dole whom she dispatched this week to the Balkans to lobby the ethnic Kosovar Albanians to accept the peace proposal.

Albright is also to meet with top NATO General Wesley Clark, chief U.S. Kosovo negotiator Christopher Hill and hold private talks with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook at his country home.

Friday, Dole met leaders in the Kosovar Albanian community, including some from the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in Macedonia after he was denied a visa to enter Kosovo by Serb authorities in Belgrade.

"They will be discussing the results of Dole's trip to the region," State Department spokesman James Rubin said, blasting Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for the visa refusal.

"President Milosevic has lost another chance to demonstrate that he is a serious member of the international community," Rubin said, adding though that Dole had succeeded in holding meetings in Skopje and that Albright had spoken to him by phone during them.

It was not immediately clear whether the ethnic Albanians had signed the peace agreement that was put on the table as the only option for both them and the Serbs last month in Rambouillet, France.

Although Rubin said he believed Dole had made "significant progress" in Skopje, reporters travelling with Albright were told "not to expect too much."

At Rambouillet, the Kosovar Albanians agreed in principle to the peace plan, which provides them with a high degree of autonomy but not the independence they want, but asked for two weeks to discuss it with their people.

The two weeks expires Tuesday and both the Albanians and the Serbs, who are still opposed to the core of the plan — a NATO peacekeeping force — are to return to the negotiating table on March 15.

Should the agreement fail, the side deemed responsible for it is to be punished, with the Kosovar Albanians facing the threat of a loss of international support and the Serbs facing NATO air strikes.

The Serbs are now massing troops on the Kosovo border for unknown reasons, would also face NATO retaliation if they resume crackdowns on ethnic Albanian population.

As the drama around Dole's visa and visit played out, Albright has come under increasingly hostile criticism in the U.S. and international press for her handling of the peace talks.

In an apparent bid to halt some of the criticism, a senior State Department official admitted that Albright and Washington had misjudged the Kosovar Albanians' interest in signing on the agreement's bottom line in Rambouillet.

"I think that's true," the official said, noting that the Albanian leadership had told Albright they would sign. "I'm not going to argue with that. They didn't sign. We misjudged that."

The criticism has clearly cut deep with officials especially angered by an influential Washington columnist who opined that Albright had so destroyed U.S. credibility that minor players in the Kosovo crisis were now hanging up the phone on her.

The senior official said the "hang up" allegation was totally false and had been based on a misunderstanding of a magazine report about the conclusion of a phone call Albright had with Adem Demaci, the KLA's former political representative.

But perhaps the most damaging to the department and Albright was a front-page report in Friday's editions of the Paris-based International Herald Tribune which quoted an unnamed American ambassador in Europe attacking the secretary for her performance at Rambouillet.

"Her energy was impressive, but her performance injected new uncertainties into the situation and sowed doubts about the seriousness of U.S. diplomacy," the ambassador said.

The damning article quoted others as criticising Albright for a variety of reasons ranging from complaints that she had been too tough to complaints that she had been in Rambouillet at all.

"When you're the United States, people are either mad at you for trying to fix a problem or they're mad at you for not trying to fix a problem," a senior administration official said in defence of Albright.

The official put most of the criticism down to "Euro complaining" and maintained that without U.S. leadership "right now we would have nothing going on on the peace front in Kosovo. Nothing."

The official admitted that thus far the Kosovo peace process had not been a total success and that Albright had been "frustrated" by her inability to complete the deal at Rambouillet.

But he stressed that neither was the process a total failure.

This is an "unfortunate series of potshots and we have been trying to do what (we) consider to be a very important and right thing.



Self-propelled guns of Britain's 88 Battery, 4 Regiment, Royal Artillery, are positioned during training. These armored vehicles are part of the British contingent to the NATO-led operation that has deployed into the Balkans, with a forward mounting base in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Reuters photo)

NATO steps up preparations for Kosovo peacekeeping

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) —

NATO pushed ahead Saturday with preparations for an eventual peacekeeping operation in Kosovo by sending units to set up a command and control centre in neighbouring Macedonia.

Units from NATO's allied command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps started deploying to the Macedonian capital of Skopje to coordinate operations of allied troops, said a statement from NATO's military headquarters.

Plans for the force to cross into Kosovo are stalled by Serbia's refusal to sign up to a peace deal that allows foreign troops to enter its southern province.

NATO says the peacekeepers will only go into Kosovo if Serbia gives the green light and signs a peace deal with ethnic Albanian rebels.

Some 6,000 NATO troops were in Macedonia ready to form the advance guard of a Kosovo peacekeeping force that is eventually expected to total 26,000.

Peace talks are due to resume March 15.

The new headquarters in Skopje will be under the operational command of U.S. Adm. James O. Ellis Jr., commander-in-chief allied forces southern Europe.

Ellis also exercises control of the NATO forces on standby in Macedonia to extract unarmed international monitors from Kosovo if they come under threat, the statement said.

A detachment from the new headquarters will assist

NATO forces being shipped into the region through the Greek port of Salonica.

NATO officials said Friday the alliance had invited senior Yugoslav military officers for a briefing this weekend aimed at easing their concerns about the role of the proposed NATO-led force in Kosovo. However officers at the alliance's military headquarters outside the southern Belgian city of Mons declined Saturday to say if the talks would take place.

Decision to share strategic city plunges Bosnia into political crisis

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — A

confrontation between angry Bosnian Serbs and U.S. peacekeeping soldiers ended with a Serb radical shot dead, NATO said Saturday.

The attack by Serbs in northern Bosnia occurred Friday night amid tension over a pair of unpopular international rulings on Bosnia — transferring the strategic city of Brcko from exclusive Bosnian Serb control, and firing the hard-line Bosnian Serb leader.

President Nikolas Poplasen refused to step down, and the Western-backed prime minister announced he would resign to protest the decision to place Brcko under multinational control.

Carlos Westendorp, the senior international official for Bosnia, Saturday predicted "turbulence" in Bosnia for the next several days.

"U.S. peacekeepers, on the alert to the potential for violence following the decisions, were confronted near their Eagle Base in Tuzla in Bosnian Serb-controlled territory, according

to a NATO account. Four armed assailants entered a restaurant in Ugljevik where the troops were coordinating humanitarian support and began striking their table with clubs and breaking glass bottles in a threatening manner.

The soldiers made their way out of the restaurant as they were punched and shoved, and were chased toward their vehicles by 15 to 20 people outside. One soldier drew his weapon after being struck in the back with a club. The soldier then fatally shot his attacker when he failed to break off his attack, the statement said.

The victim was later identified as Krsto Micic, the vice president of the hard-line Bosnian Serb Radical Party in the town of Ugljevik.

His party issued a statement in Belgrade saying "Bloodthirsty American criminals and terrorists" shot Micic "in cold blood." It said "American bandits ... will pay dearly for murdering Micic."

Some 6,900 U.S. troops are serving in Bosnia as a part of the 32,000-strong multinational contingent, trying to implement the peace process in the post-war country.

"We are going to have turbulence in the coming days but I hope that with our constant pressure and dialogue we could come to an improvement of the peace implementation process," Westendorp told CNN in an interview broadcast Saturday.

He called it "just a simple coincidence" that both rulings — which inflamed Serb nationalists — came on the same day Friday.

Friday, Westendorp said Brcko would no longer remain under Bosnian Serb control. Instead, all three ethnic groups — Serbs, Croats and Muslims — will administer Brcko, a city of about 90,000 that the Serbs had run under international supervision.

The decision resolves the last major territorial issue left from the Bosnian war. Negotiators at Dayton decided to defer a ruling because of strong claims made on the city by the three ethnic groups.

International leaders ranging from Croatian

President Franjo Tudjman to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana welcomed the decision by U.S. chief arbitrator Roberts Owen.

Before the decision was announced, Westendorp fired Poplasen, saying he ignored "the will of the people ... and consistently acted to trigger instability."

Poplasen had insisted that Serbs retain control of Brcko. He called the order to step down "undemocratic and contrary" to the Dayton peace agreement and said, "I cannot accept it."

He called for a referendum to decide whether he should remain in office. Under the Bosnian Serb constitution, Vice President Mirko Sarovic would succeed Poplasen. But Sarovic refused.

The sacking of Poplasen followed his efforts to remove the pro-Western prime minister, Milorad Dodik. Dodik announced later Friday that he was resigning because of the Brcko decision — a move international supervisors urged him to reconsider.

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World News

Bodies of victims flown out from Uganda

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — In a subdued culmination to a tragic week, the bodies of eight foreign tourists killed by Hutu rebels in a Ugandan national park were flown out of the country and began their journey home.

The coffins bearing the remains of the tourists, including two Americans, arrived early Saturday at London's Gatwick airport.

Before being put on the plane at Entebbe airport in the Ugandan capital of Kampala, a private flag-folding ceremony was held for the two Americans, Rob Haubner, 48, and Susan Miller, 42.

Haubner and Miller were Oregon-based executives at the Computer Chip giant Intel. Like the other victims, they were visiting southwestern Uganda's Bwindi National Park to see its rare mountain gorillas.

The eight tourists were hacked and bludgeoned to death by Hutu Rwandan rebels who attacked three campsites Monday. Four rangers were also killed, and six other tourists managed to escape.

The flags were given to the slain Americans' friends, Susan Studd and Bob McLaurin, also Intel employees, who survived the rebel attack and who accompanied the bodies on the flight to Britain, said U.S. embassy public affairs officer Virgil Bodeen.

Bodeen said they would take the flags to the victims' families. The other victims included four Britons and two New Zealanders.

The Ugandan government, meanwhile, said it would make every effort to ensure the safety of future tourists.

The Ugandan army has intensified a joint hunt with Rwandan forces to capture or kill the Hutu rebels behind the attacks.

Hundreds of troops are combing the dense jungles along the Uganda-Congo border looking for the rebels. Fifteen rebels, some wearing clothes stolen from the tourists, were killed by the troops Wednesday, Uganda officials reported.

"I can assure you we are doing everything possible so that this point of tourism is safe for everyone," said Uganda Foreign Minister Eriya Kategaya. Still, the rebels — Rwandans who are based in eastern Congo — may be difficult to stop because of Congo's uncooperative government, Kategaya said.

Kategaya met with the U.S. and British ambassadors Friday to express his country's condolences.

Meanwhile, an FBI team and detectives from Scotland Yard are working with Kenyan investigators. Kategaya said he hoped the investigation might shed light on how the rebels had obtained such precise information about the campsites.

"Maybe there are some collaborators within our population, because the attacks seemed to have been very precise and clear with prior information on the positions of the people and even the look of the place," Kategaya said.

He said he was unaware of the detention of a suspect, which had been reported in a government-owned newspaper Thursday.

The Rwandan rebels were among Hutu fighters who fled Rwanda in 1994 after killing more than 500,000 minority Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus in a government-orchestrated genocide.

Since then they have been operating from bases in Congo, launching cross-border attacks in Rwanda and more recently inside Congo and in Uganda.

Nancy Powell, the U.S. ambassador to Uganda, said a note that the rebels gave to an American survivor of the attack criticised the U.S. and British governments for supporting Rwanda.

She said it was signed with the acronym ALIR, or the Rwanda Liberation Army, which put a bounty on the heads of Americans in Rwanda in 1996. The group has claimed responsibility for several rebel attacks in northwestern Rwanda in 1996 and 1997.



Fire and rescue workers check through the wreckage of the Air France Boeing 747 freighter after it had crashed and burst into flames at Madras, India. The freighter with faulty landing gear ploughed into the runway at Madras Saturday and soon burst into flames, senior aviation officers said. According to airport authority all five crew members were safe, although one was in hospital with broken bones (Reuters photo)

Air France cargo plane burns on India landing

MADRAS (R) — An Air France Boeing 747 freighter said to have faulty landing gear ploughed into a runway at Madras Saturday and soon burst into flames, senior aviation officers said. According to airport authority all five crew members were safe, although one was in hospital with broken bones (Reuters photo)

up smoke and then caught fire," H.S. Khola, director-general of civil aviation, told Reuters. "Fire vehicles were then rushed to the aircraft, but they failed to extinguish the flames."

The airports authority official said the plane had burst into flames at the wings about 20 minutes after touchdown as firefighters were attending to smoke coming from the fuselage.

"The fire spread to the engines, which burst into flames, and the entire plane is now totally gutted," the official said.

Khola said he had ordered an inquiry that would involve the directorate-general of civil aviation and Air France.

The aircraft, purchased by Air France in 1978, had had some problems with its nose wheel about 2,130 metres after touchdown, said the airport official.

"Probably the nose wheel did not extend. The aircraft threw

from Frankfurt was diverted to Bombay and a Swiss freighter from Singapore was diverted to Bangalore.

The first 2,130 metres of the runway was reopened at 12:34 p.m. (0704 GMT), allowing Boeing 737s and Airbus A-320s to land, the airports authority said.

Airport officials hoped the full runway would be open late in the evening, he added.

Kumar said the Air France freighter had been carrying 66 tonnes of cargo. He said he did not have details, but the plane appeared to be carrying some garments.

An airport security official, who asked not to be identified, said the plane was carrying medicines and machine parts, and that the medicines had been destroyed.

Air France spokesman Vinay Mohindra said a special technical team would be sent from Paris later Saturday to assist

Indian authorities and assess the cause of the fire.

The flight originated in Paris and arrived in India via Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. It flew to Madras from the nearby Indian city of Bangalore and was bound for Karachi, Pakistan.

The accident was Air France's fourth in the past year.

All 43 passengers and 10 crew on board a Boeing 727-200 belonging to Ecuador's military-run Tame Airlines and leased by Air France died on April 20, 1998, when the plane crashed into a mountain near Bogota soon after take-off.

On Dec. 30, an Air France 737-300 with 59 passengers landed safely at Lyon after losing a wheel soon after take-off.

On Feb. 13, an Air France Airbus A-320 landing at the southern French city of Montpellier collided with a glider, tearing off its right wing, but both craft touched down safely.

Democratic Party (LDP) was quoted by the Yomiuri as saying.

"He is going to resign, which is the best choice," the unnamed official said.

Another senior LDP official told the Sankei Shimbun: "He cannot help but resign to calm down the confusion."

The two largest opposition parties, the Democratic Party and the Komei Party, agreed late Friday to jointly demand his resignation.

Nakamura is under fire as parliament has been suspended since opposition parties launched a boycott calling for his resignation.

Shozaburo Nakamura, has decided to step down following allegations that he used his position to keep a document written by the U.S. star explaining his arrival here without a passport, newspaper said.

Nakamura told reporters late Friday: "I want to think after seeing situations Monday."

Schwarzenegger flew into Osaka in a private plane last October to attend a groundbreaking ceremony for a theme park. He reportedly explained his passport had been stolen when he could not produce a travel document.

He is to meet Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi early next week and inform the premier of his intention of resigning, the Yomiuri Shimbun said.

Obuchi is expected to accept it, the mass-circulation daily said.

The justice minister has a lot of trouble," a senior official of the ruling Liberal

But it took nearly half a

Gusmao holds first known talks with pro-Indonesian Timorese leaders

JAKARTA (AFP) — Xanana Gusmao, the jailed leader of East Timor's independence movement, held talks here Saturday with three opposing pro-Indonesian East Timorese militia chiefs, officials said.

The unannounced meeting, in a second-floor office of the justice ministry in central Jakarta, came a day after both Gusmao and the militia leaders met with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

But Clemente dos Reis Amaral, secretary general of Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights, told reporters the talks were not a result of Albright's visit but had been planned "several days ago."

Gusmao's meeting with the three hardline pro-independence leaders — Domingo

Policarpo, Domingo Soares and Matheus Maia — were the first known between leaders of the two bitterly opposed sides in East Timor since Jakarta suggested it could give the territory independence.

Albright said Gusmao, who is serving a 20-year sentence here for armed rebellion, had told her he hoped to bring the warring factions together through dialogue and avert an escalation of the violence.

He has also called for an international "presence" in East Timor during the transition to either independence or autonomy to ensure a smooth transition.

Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975 and annexed it a year later in a move never recognised by the United Nations.

Talks under U.N. auspices between Lisbon and Jakarta are scheduled to resume next week to finalise the autonomy proposal.

Japanese minister to quit in Schwarzenegger scandal

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's justice minister is to resign early next week over an immigration blunder involving his hero, U.S. movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger, news reports said Saturday.

The 64-year-old minister, Shozaburo Nakamura, has decided to step down following allegations that he used his position to keep a document written by the U.S. star explaining his arrival here without a passport, newspaper said.

Nakamura is under fire as parliament has been suspended since opposition parties launched a boycott calling for his resignation.

He is to meet Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi early next week and inform the premier of his intention of resigning, the Yomiuri Shimbun said.

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The justice minister has a lot of trouble," a senior official of the ruling Liberal

year for the document to reach the Justice ministry's department in charge of immigration, giving rise to suspicions that Nakamura — a confessed Schwarzenegger fan — had kept it as a keepsake.

The justice minister told parliament he had approved Schwarzenegger's entry after seeing a faxed copy of the report and the original report reached his office much later.

"I told my secretary to return it but it had apparently been left in the minister's office," said Nakamura, who became justice minister when Keizo Obuchi was elected prime minister last July.

"I and all in the family are Schwarzenegger fans," he said.

In January, Nakamura caused a storm when he suggested in a New Year's speech to Justice ministry officials that Japan should revise its anti-war constitution to have a full-fledged military.

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Rawabdeh's tough task

THERE IS near consensus that the top priority for the government of Ahud Raouf Rawabdeh is to reform economy, which suffers stagnation, and to alleviate poverty and unemployment. Most governments in recent years have had similar mandates but failed to attain much in terms of reversing the tide of poverty and rising unemployment. The reasons for their failures are plentiful and range from external factors such as the deepening recession in the world economy, low oil prices and regional political instability. Would the new prime minister then succeed where all previous efforts failed? Does Rawabdeh have a magic wand to stimulate the slackening economy, reduce poverty and create employment?

Our economy is to a great extent part of the global and regional ones. As long as these two pass through a recessionary period, we should not expect the able Rawabdeh to work miracles.

The Arab Gulf countries on which many pin hope for more investment in Jordan and improved trade face severe strains due to the dramatic drop in the price of oil. Some of the richest Gulf states have trouble balancing their own budgets. Foreign investment is still trickling into the country, but at a rate that is much below what is urgently needed.

As long as the peace process is stalled, the climate for investment will continue to suffer as well. Prospects for better trade with the Palestinians depend on the goodwill of the Israeli government. If the peace process on the Palestinian-Israeli track were to receive a boost, that would create confidence and a better climate for trade and investment.

On the other hand, much of our exports still need the opening of Iraqi market. Our industry needs to grow faster, but with markets closed, there is very little industrialists can do.

The lack of appropriate legislation is a factor hindering investment. There is, of course, always room for further perfecting and refining the existing laws, yet that in its own is not enough. We also need to create new markets and to diversify, especially by taking up the fastest growing industry, infotainment.

This requires releasing the Jordanian educational and creative potential through more liberal legislation, like a new press law that allows Jordanians to enter with full force the market of information and entertainment. There is a huge market in the Arab World, that knows no boundaries, for information and media entertainment. And there is an army of computer wizkids in the country and equally of artists, graphic designers, educationalists and the likes of whom could turn Jordan into a centre of infotainment.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra's Taher Adwan said that in recent years, Jordan has reached an advanced stage of political "maturity," and its national issues are no longer only debatable between society's different powers or the government, thanks to the Hashemite leadership. In addition to this internal maturity, the Kingdom has witnessed openness from several Arab and foreign parties, who have offered their political and economic assistance — a factor that will create a positive atmosphere in which to achieve economic success to help the country eliminate unemployment and other problems, added Adwan. Such positive signs both internal and external should be exploited to achieve the best for the country, and it is not an exaggeration to say that the situation is currently dependent on proper governmental policies and taking the "correct" decisions, said the writer, who added that the only thing that worries Jordanians at this stage is the economic situation.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket said Jordan's recent efforts to achieve in-depth political relations and solidarity with Arabs and to overcome earlier obstacles, have put an end to speculations about continuity, and the actual results of such Arab ties. Positive developments have taken place in recent weeks with Syria and Kuwait, after political and diplomatic relations with these states had been "cold," said Saket, who added that important practical steps have been taken with respect to financial assistance. Jordanians praised and appreciated such support because it reveals political and economic directives that can help the Kingdom overcome its obstacles and challenges, said the writer. Jordan's location, economic capabilities and political challenges force it to seek strong relations with all "brothers" as it is the only way to meet these difficulties, according to Saket. Therefore, the Kingdom is required to deal with different points of view, which are sometimes contradictory at the national and international levels, he added. The writer said he believes that in order to maintain such an important approach, Jordan has to find a "tough and complicated" formula to deal with a "divided" Arab situation, which yields to international plans and interests.

Strong government needed to coordinate policy

JORDAN HAS just entered a new era. As far as Jordan is concerned, the 21st century has begun two years earlier than a traditional calendar would indicate. It is not that the world around us has changed, the change took place inside Jordan, through a transfer of power from one generation to another.

Since the stage, we have just entered, is new for domestic considerations, it is only normal for the imperatives to stem mainly from issues inherited from the previous era. They will come by way of adjustment, correction, and meeting challenges and problems as a pretext for a fresh start.

Some analysts believe that political aspects should take priority. They cite the near stagnation of democracy, and the near failure of the peace process. Others believe that economic aspects are more urgent and deserve higher priority.

They point out the meagre economic growth rate, the spread of poverty, the high unemployment rate, and the heavy debt burden.

These two sets of priorities are by no means contradictory or mutually exclusive. True, the new regime may choose to start with the political issues or with the economic issues, but the two sets of issues go hand in hand. The diagnosis, planning, decision-making and implementation are not missions left for an individual to tackle full time. They are the responsibility of different institutions. Those in charge of the democratic process, and the relations with Israel may have nothing to do with the current economic issues of the country, they hardly have an economic role to play.

Those institutions, on the other hand, who should worry about the restoration of economic growth, good management of external

debts, poverty and alleviating unemployment are not responsible for the political performance of the country and may have no political role to play.

There is a sort of division of labour. The expression "Economic Ministerial Team" is now a household label. Perhaps we shall soon have what is to be called "Political Ministerial Team" and even an "Administration Ministerial Team" to deal with redundant staff, policies and regulations, promote transparency, and to wage war against corruption in both the public and private sectors.

Overall responsibility to indicate the general direction, set the tone and coordinate all efforts, remains on the shoulders of a strong central government, with a clear vision for the future, and full knowledge of exactly what should

Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Fanek

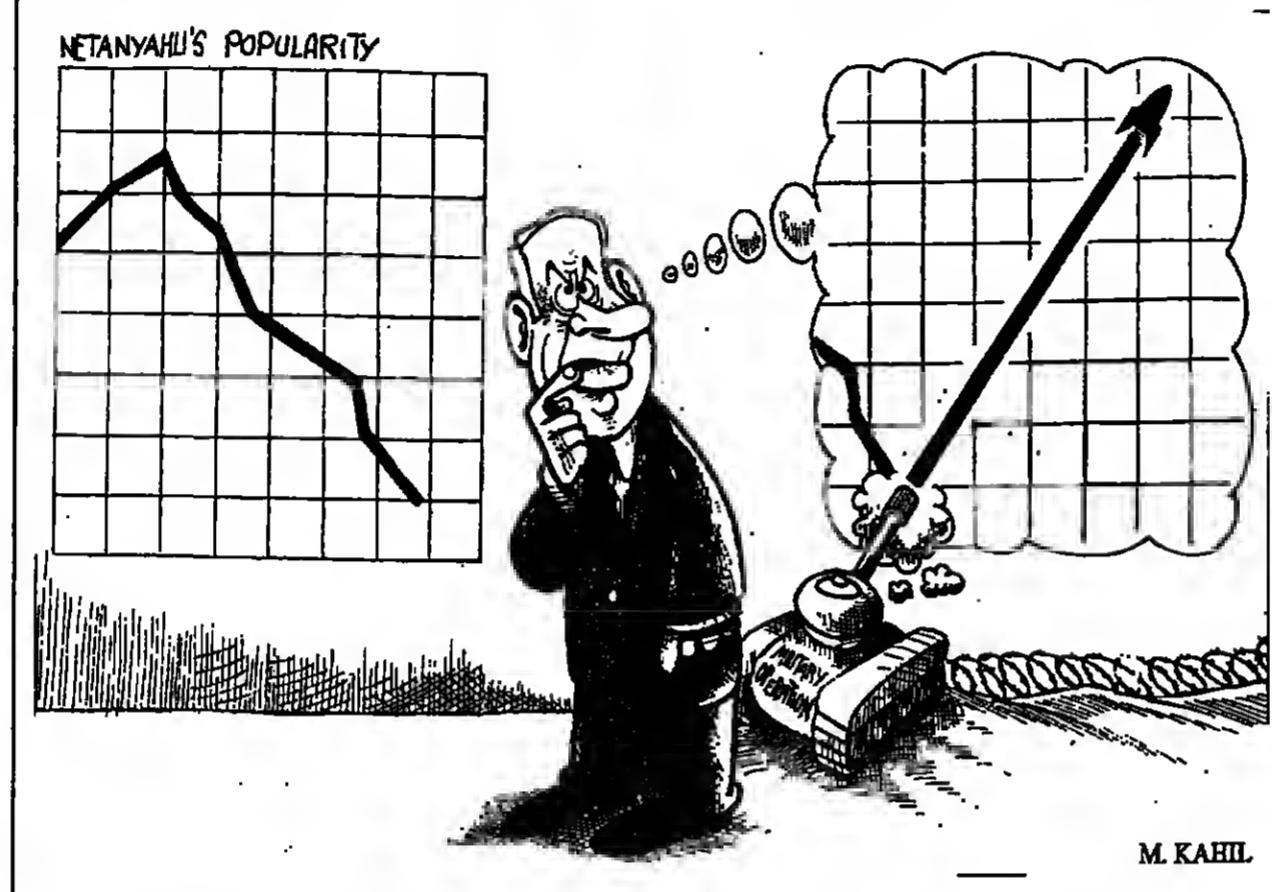
be done. A government that possesses the will needed to move effectively, and enjoys full support from the King, the Parliament, and public opinion.

In our case, it seems that little differences, if any, exist regarding the political, economic and

administrative priorities for the new era. However, there are lots of ideas regarding the specifics and perhaps the personalities who should be entrusted with the multiple mission.

The identification of objectives and ways and means to achieve them are admittedly of the utmost importance, but no one can underestimate the importance of the qualified individuals which should be charged with the heavy duty. This is evident by the Royal letters of designation addressed to new prime ministers, during the past decade, which used to list objectives and policies. Unfortunately, most of the governments could not rise to the level of the challenge and eventually failed to reach the specific goals they undertook to reach.

Identification of priorities and objectives is necessary but not sufficient.



Race relations: No simple pattern, no golden rule

By Gwynne Dyer

BACK IN 1979 director Walter Hill, recalling the success of 'West Side Story' (which transposed Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' to 1950s New York City street gangs), made a clever film called 'The Warriors.' The classical text he looted was much older, however: Xenophon's 'Anabasis,' the story of 10,000 Greek mercenaries who were left stranded and surrounded by enemies 1500 km from the sea after the prince they had backed for the Persian throne was killed in 401 BC.

As 'Anabasis' told how the desperate Greeks fought their way through hostile tribes back down to the safety of the Black Sea, so 'The Warriors' tells the story of a street gang from Coney Island fighting their way back home across New York City, with every other gang trying to kill them, after a meeting up in the Bronx goes terribly wrong.

It was a stylish film with a great soundtrack. But as an American friend pointed out to me, it contained one completely implausible element: the Warriors included whites, blacks, a Latino and even a native American Indian.

Street gangs in America always consist of only one race or ethnic group.

'West Side Story' got it right: 'The Warriors' got it wrong. Which is a depressing thought after a week that has seen a murder trial in Texas where the victim was chosen at random because he was black, and the release of a report on the racial killing of a black youth in London that bluntly describes the Metropolitan Police as "institutionally racist."

So you have to ask: are 'Western' societies as a whole intrinsically racist? Is the best anyone can hope for a "separate but equal" society with little real crossing of the racial lines, or can white-majority societies ever evolve into colour-blind multiracial cultures? The answer depends not on how well-meaning elites think, but on the attitudes down in the broad bottom of the society — so street gangs are relevant.

The situation in France, which is usually

portrayed as a botched racial hatred (the anti-immigrant National Front wins up to 15 per cent of the vote in national elections), is even more instructive. The 'banlieus' surrounding big French cities include huge tracts of high-rise public housing where the government has dumped both the white underclass and most of the country's large immigrant population, and they are indeed overrun by gangs.

To listen to rightwing French politicians ranting on the television, you would think that the gangs were an Islamic revolution in the making, but nothing could be further from the truth. Their members are tough and sometimes alarmingly well-armed kids who fight rival gangs and swarm the malls in neighbouring banlieus. It makes sense, in an ugly way: most black British have West Indian origins,

on weekends, stealing everything they can carry away — but they are NOT defined by race or culture.

A typical gang will contain white French kids, Muslim kids of Algerian and Moroccan origin, black Africans of both Christian and Muslim descent, and maybe some Turks and Yugoslavs. They are the kids who grew up in this particular cluster of tower-blocks — this 'cité' — and all the other 'cités' are enemy turf. Again, it's not a pretty situation, but it is not a racially charged situation at all. The Warriors could exist in France.

What all this is telling us is that the historic pattern of race relations in the United States is not the inevitable template for all other multiracial societies. Other countries, with different histories and cultures, can end up in quite different patterns.

It may also be telling us that the cup is half-full, not half-empty, even in the US. The Texas jury did convict the murderer of James Earl Ray, after all, and sentenced him to death. Stephen Lawrence's racist murderer in London will never be convicted because the police bungled the investigation so badly, but at last an official inquiry has opened up the whole issue of a racist culture in the police force.

And then there is the submerged ninth-tenths of the iceberg: the soaring proportion of men and women from all racial groups who 'mix' out in every Western country.

About 10 per cent of African-American males are married to white women, up from 2 per cent in their parents' time. Thirty per cent of young British men and women of West Indian origin have a white partner. Some 60 per cent of Asian Americans in their 20s are marrying somebody of another race. Give it one more generation, and the traditional racial categories will simply dissolve throughout the West.

The writer is a London based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

Correction

The Jordan Times would like to clarify that yesterday's article concerning the Senate's approval of the amendment of the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development Law, to incorporate the new title of "The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development" was wrongly attributed. The basis for the article was the official statement made by the fund itself and no other sources.

Letters to the editor

UNICEF does its best

WE, THE executive directors of UNICEF and the World Food Programme, together with the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, wish to express our disappointment over inaccurate and unbalanced criticisms by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) and its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Sudan.

Against a backdrop of a 15-year civil war, OLS has been working to save millions of lives by providing emergency food, medicine, and access to clean water. In a report released last week by MSF, OLS is accused of responding slowly to last year's famine and has been criticised for instances of food diversion.

The issues raised are not new, and have been addressed over the past year by OLS, a consortium of U.N. and non-governmental organisations.

In 1998, OLS members worked together to turn around the famine and reduce malnutrition rates from a high of 45-50 per cent down to 10-15 per cent in the most affected areas. While many lives were lost because of war and resulting famine, it is important to recognise that hundreds of thousands of lives were saved thanks to the emergency relief programmes of OLS and the generous support of the international donor community.

No one should ignore that the responsibility for the war and famine in south Sudan lies squarely with the warring parties. While we recognise that humanitarian aid is not an adequate replacement for diplomacy, we believe that our foremost responsibility is to save lives. OLS currently supplies emergency aid to over 2.6 million of the most vulnerable. MSF's recent statements indicate that they believe OLS should cease functioning until a perfect system for access and distribution in Sudan is guaranteed. This is unrealistic. The result may be better consciences for some, but for the people of southern Sudan, the inevitable result would be further loss of life.

Increasingly, humanitarian aid is needed most in countries torn by civil and political conflict. Issuing public statements of principle and halting aid to victims of conflict may seem sensible. But most of us do not have that luxury. We have no choice but to save lives wherever we can.

The overriding imperative is to continue with the difficult but necessary humanitarian task, to negotiate with those who cause war on behalf of those who suffer from it — and, finally, to do our best to save innocent lives.

Executive Director, Carol Bellamy
Executive Director, Catherine Bertini
Emergency Relief Coordinator, Sergio Vieira de Mello
UNICEF
World Food Programme
U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Letter of condolence

AT THIS period of personal grief over the sad demise of His Majesty King Hussein, I thought of writing to His Majesty King Abdullah, Queen Noor and other members of the Royal Family to convey our profound grief and sorrow over the loss of a great statesman of the Muslim World. The presence of so many heads of state and governments testified to the greatness of the late King, and of course his presence in the Wye agreement, in spite of his poor health, has earned for him acclaim and gratitude not only from the Western and Arab World, but also from the Palestinians who have been struggling for the last 50 odd years for their legitimate rights.

I had the great honour of meeting the late King at a reception hosted by the Pakistani president on whose staff I was serving at that time, when he came on a state visit to Pakistan in 1969. I was wearing our Corps Blue Patrol Uniform and the mail chain on my shoulders, seeing which he remarked smilingly — "An Cavalry I presume" and shook my hand warmly. It is a scene which remains etched in my memory! I had the good fortune to visit Amman a number of times and have many good friends there.

The funeral ceremonies as we watched on the television were magnificent in their simplicity and solemnity in the truest form of Islamic rites.

To His Majesty King Abdullah, who has ascended the Throne at a time when conditions in and around the country are fluid: all of us here including our prime minister who visited you recently, pray that Almighty Allah protect you and that you do not have to face the grave crises that your late father so magnificently handled in his youth.

May Allah guide you and keep the Royal Family, including the Crown Prince in good health and may you live long and well.

Major General Iskander Karim
Dhaka
Bangladesh

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

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St. Louis, Missouri

A century
Zionism and
the Jews

Features

Jordan Times, Sunday, March 7, 1999 7

Continuing arms row could spell end for Northern Irish peace

By Elaine Monaghan
Reuters

"NOT A bullet. Not an ounce" is how the Irish Republican Army's attachment to its guns and explosives has been expressed in West Belfast graffiti.

"Never again" screams a mural recalling the burning of Roman Catholic homes on Bombay Street, where people live in the shadow of a metal wall — part of a peace line which shields both communities in Northern Ireland's main city from attack.

To the rest of the world, demands that the IRA prove its commitment to peace by disarming, or decommissioning as it is known in the province's peace accord, sound totally reasonable.

But to the IRA, they are a cynical request to surrender on its knees, spit on generations of sacrifice by its kin and concede defeat when it sees itself as defeated in a noble fight to unite Ireland and end domination by Protestants.

The gulf drives a stand-off which is threatening the success of the Belfast Agreement signed on April 10 last year and has psychological, historical and political elements.

It seems there is little room for manoeuvre in the run-up to March 10, the target date for a transfer of some home rule to Belfast, the setting up of all-Ireland bodies and votes on whether to exclude from power anyone who failed to honour commitments on disarmament enshrined in the peace accord.

The peace deal, signed two days before Easter on Good Friday, which falls on April 2 this year, binds signatories to using all their influence to disarm guerrilla groups.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and his chief lieutenant Martin McGuinness, the party's contact man on a decommissioning body led by Canadian general John de Chastelain, have pledged to do all they can to remove all the guns from Irish politics —

including those held by the party's military wing, the IRA.

But while most people remain optimistic that no one will walk away from the accord, previous peace efforts have foundered on the very issue of IRA disarmament.

"No one round here wants the IRA to decommission," said one man on the doorstep of his metal-shuttered house on Bombay Street, voicing a fear in Irish nationalist areas that they will be left defenceless if the outlawed organisation has no guns.

The province's Protestant leader David Trimble is in a tight spot. Under huge pressure, he has promised Protestants who are torn into two camps by the accord that Sinn Fein will not sit in a new executive until the IRA starts disarming — though the deal only sets a completion date for the process of May 2000.

His words are welcomed by Protestants on the other side of the peace line who will never forget the bombs that ripped through their community and distrust the IRA's July 1997 truce.

"For every date the Republicans cast up, we have one of our own," said May Blood, a community activist and member of the Women's Coalition Party who lives and works in the hardline Protestant heartland of the Shankill Road.

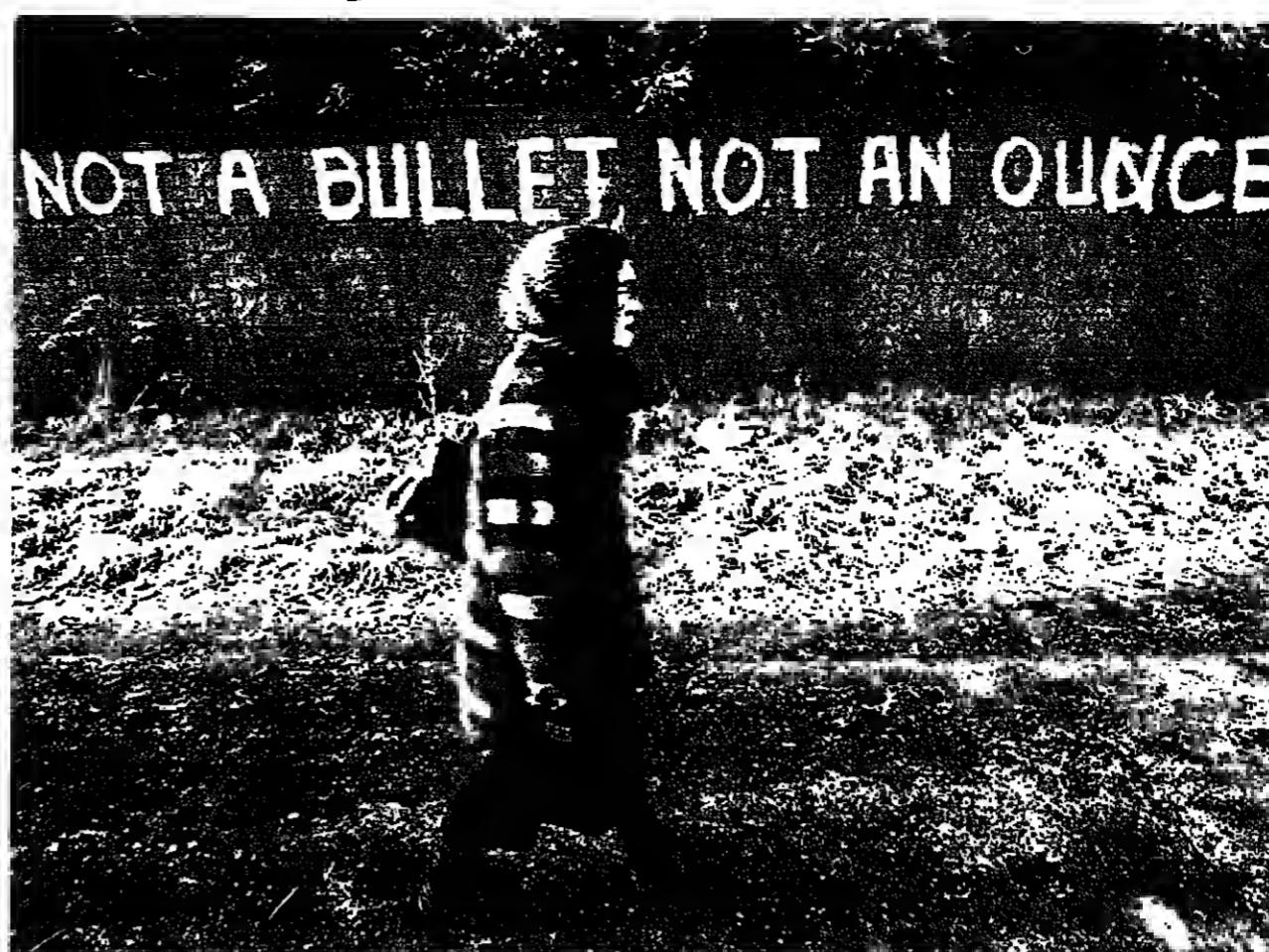
She remembers the houses burning on Bombay Street — but she also remembers her family being petrol-bombed out of its own home, not to mention a horrific catalogue of bombings inflicted on both communities at the height of the conflict.

Sinn Fein is under pressure too. If it pushed for disarmament too soon, the IRA could rip apart, Republicans say.

The last split spawned the real IRA, which killed 29 people with a car bomb in the market town of Omagh last August.

And without its allies in the executive, the IRA would see little hope in all-Ireland bodies which Adams has convinced them could be an embryonic united Ireland.

Fears are rising that the disarma-



A woman walks in front of a wall showing graffiti in support of Irish Republicans in a west Belfast housing estate. The graffiti, which is an angry response from the IRA to demands to start decommissioning their weapons, comes after British Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote in two leading Belfast newspapers that a start to decommissioning would do more to create confidence between the two communities in Northern Ireland than any other single step (Reuters photo)

ment stand-off could bring the peace deal tumbling down, or worse still break the long-standing ceasefires with the IRA loses patience with the political process.

The pro-British Loyalists on the other side of the 30-year conflict have also pledged to hold on to their guns, seeing themselves as defenders of their communities from IRA vio-

lence.

But with just two representatives in Belfast's new Assembly to Sinn Fein's 18, there is less focus on the Loyalists.

"It's a stand-off. If you don't move, I won't move," is how Blood summed up the views of hardliners on both sides.

"You can only hold people back for

so long. The whole thing could collapse like a house of cards," she said, though she was certain the violence would never hit the levels of past years.

Her fear is that as the pressure rises, someone could make a mistake — and set off a new spiral of tit-for-tat violence.

Ironically, many Loyalists and

A century of Zionism and the Jewish state

Zionism over a Hundred Years
Dr. Walid Al Khalidi
Dar Al Nahar Publishing House
Beirut 1998

DR. WALID AL KHALIDI is a very well-known Palestinian author. Currently a professor at Harvard University, he worked for many years as professor of history in the American University of Beirut. He wrote many books on Palestine and on the Palestinian tragedy of 1948 among which were: "From Haven to Refugee" and "Before the Diaspora — The History of the Palestinian people from 1876 to 1948".

Zionism over a Hundred Years covers four periods of Zionism: the first from the beginning of Zionism in 1897 to 1917, the second from 1917 to 1948. The third period runs from 1948 to 1967 and the fourth from 1967 to 1997. 1897 is the year the Zionist Congress took place in Basle, Switzerland. At that time Herzl, the father of Zionism, stated that the Jewish state would see the light in fifty years. He also wrote a book in German titled *Judenstaat* (The Jewish state). The Zionist movement, according to the author, was originally a European Jewish one, the purpose of which was the immigration of Jews to Palestine for religious purposes. However, fundamentalist religious Jews were against Zionism on the grounds that the collective or wholesale return of Jews to Palestine was dependent upon God and the coming of the Messiah. Herzl, however, succeeded in creating the Zionist movement which subsequently won the support of secular Jews. It should be mentioned here that the idea of the creation of a Jewish state was not accepted by the Basle Congress which recommended instead the creation in Palestine of a 'home' for the Jewish people which would be

secured by public law.

The author also discusses European attitudes towards Zionism until the issue of the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 by the British government, a document the Zionists came to rely on for the Jewish colonisation in Palestine. Secular Jews of Europe no longer objected to Zionism as a result of the Balfour Declaration, which removed the fear which lingered in their minds about dual loyalties: to the country in which they were living and a Jewish state.

Khalidi argues that at the peace conference of 1917 held in Paris after World War I, Zionist leaders played an important role in confirming the Balfour Declaration as part of the British Mandate over Palestine.

From 1922 to 1948 Zionism achieved two purposes: laying the foundation of the Jewish state with the full approval and support of the British mandatory power politically, administratively and legislatively and establishing that Jewish state itself in 1948.

The third period, from 1948 to 1967, sees the Jewish state firmly establishing itself. According to the author the Jewish state earned many advantages from the triple aggression of 1956 (Britain, France, Israel). Subsequently, Israel occupied the whole of Palestine in 1967. The fourth period, 1967 to 1997, is the period of the expansion of the Jewish state and its hegemony in the Middle East.

The author firmly relates Zionism and the Jewish state and vice-versa, and one can surely conclude that without the spread and force of Zionism in Europe and subsequently in the U.S., the Jewish state would not have been created.

Zionism over a Hundred Years is currently only published in Arabic.

Pascal B. Karmy

An alternative and lucid guide to Jerusalem guaranteed to make you want to go

Living Stones Pilgrimage with the Christians of the Holy Land: A Guide Alison Hilliard and Betty Jane Bailey Cassell (London), 1999 132 p., colour photos

JERUSALEM IS a place of many superlatives and splendid human deeds inspired by faith, and this book is one more example of excellence that emanates from that holy city. This book is unlike any other available today. It is designed, as the authors say in their introduction, as both an introduction to the history, traditions, and buildings of the main church denominations in the city, and as "alternative and more authentic way of exploring Jerusalem and its holy sites."

On both counts, it achieves its aims admirably, repeatedly startling the reader with fascinating facts of church history or traditions while also stimulating a strong desire to visit the many places mentioned in the text. More importantly, it provides a badly needed, factual and non-political affirmation of the rich human and spiritual reality of the Christians of Palestine, who maintain a continuous religious tradition going back to the days of Christ. One hopes that a similar book on Muslim traditions might also be produced soon, thereby giving visitors to the holy city a comprehensive picture of its Christian, Muslim and Jewish dimensions.

This is not a traditional guide book with detailed information and plans and drawings of sites. Rather, it is a general overview of and introduction to the Christian churches that are active in Jerusalem and Palestine, with detailed information on such things as times and places of services, special commemorations and ceremonies, and explanations of the most important traditions that one encounters in the city's Christian shrines.

Here, for example, you can learn more about the role of icons in Orthodox Churches, the symbolism of the Armenian priests' distinctive pointed hood head-dress, the church on the site where Christians first gathered in the decades after Christ's death, the stunning

frescoes in the Church of St. John the Baptist (probably the oldest in the city), and which monastery to visit if you want to say a prayer for St. Onuphrius, reputed to assist travellers by sea and those having trouble with court cases.

Most people who buy and use this fine little book will also buy a traditional touristic guide that gives detailed information about the many historic and religious sites in Jerusalem and Palestine/Israel (I recommend Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's excellent book for that purpose). In this volume, readers will learn about every denomina-

tion and its churches and services, thus allowing for a more carefully planned visit to the holy city and its many spiritual sites.

The information provided is just enough to explain basic points of relevance to the visitor and to stimulate the appetite for a visit to the city, while keeping the book small enough to be carried and read during a walk through the city. The section on the icons and candles used in Greek Orthodox services, for example, is typically well written, concise and satisfying. It will forever enhance your visit to any such church.

Some of the most useful information is of the practical variety — where to find the best religious bookshops, to buy authentic Palestinian handicrafts, to find accommodations in church-owned pilgrims' resthouses, to interact with Palestinian Christians, and to attend church services in a variety of languages (including Aramean, the language spoken by Jesus Christ). Several walking tours are also outlined, with a combination of practical directions, best times of year and day to make the trip, and the spiritual significance of it all.

These include the pilgrimage along the 14 stations of the Via Dolorosa (do your own trip or join the weekly trip led by the

Franciscan monks of Jerusalem every Friday afternoon at 3 p.m.), a walk down the Mount of Olives, and a Holy Week walk retracing the steps of Jesus' last days.

The bulk of the book is very logically organised into sections on the separate churches, the Garden Tomb and Church of the Holy Sepulchre, "medieval pilgrimages" in Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine/Israel (Bethlehem, Nazareth, Sea of Galilee), and brief sections on other towns and villages in Palestine, such as Gaza, Bir Zeit, and Taybeh, among others.

The book finishes with mention and description of some annual celebrations, such as the Christmas and Easter Week festivities, commemorations of the Annunciation in Nazareth, St. George's Day celebrations at El Khadri village, and several others. The last section of the book points you to good places to buy locally made handicrafts and souvenirs and to sources of further information on the living Christian communities of the Holy Land.

This book was initially conceived as a project by the Jerusalem Liaison Office of the Middle East Council of Churches, whose director Harry Hagopian offers some information on Palestinian Christians today in his welcome remarks. He rightly makes the point that one of the aims of this book is to stimulate contacts between foreign visitors and the local Christian community, the "living stones who trace their roots to Jesus' disciples and to the Church of the First Pentecost."

One of the important but very subtle sub-themes that runs through the book is the idea that the moral dictates of Jesus Christ's life and mission should stimulate visitors to the Holy Land to ponder the suffering, needs and rights of the people who live there today. This idea is poignantly expressed in some of the personal reflections by indigenous church leaders in the section on the Via Dolorosa, where each stop should prompt a pilgrim or visitor to reflect on what happened there in the days of Jesus and on how people today should react to the situation of

WITH THE CHRISTIANS OF THE HOLY LAND

Alison Hilliard and Betty Jane Bailey

A GUIDE



The book was produced in collaboration with the Jerusalem Liaison Office of the Middle East Council of Churches, and is beautifully illustrated by the colour photographs of Garo Galbadian. It was officially launched in a ceremony in Jerusalem last week, and is available in bookshops there.

I recommend it without hesitation to people of all faiths. Read it before you next go to Jerusalem, and it will enrich your visit to the city and also expand your appreciation of the human and spiritual heritage that defines that very special place and its remarkable people.

Rami G. Khouri

New finance minister spells out Lebanon's economic malaise

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Lebanese economy is plagued by billions of dollars in public debt, a deep real estate crisis and expensive production costs, the country's new finance minister, Georges Corm, said in an in-depth interview recently.

"The black spots are the public debt and the real estate crisis, in addition to expensive production costs ... that cannot even meet regional competition," Corm told the French-language magazine "Le Commerce du Levant."

"The immediate objective is to stabilise the debt relative to expenditures and bring it down over the next five years from 115 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 80 per cent," he said.

The Lebanese economy has been reeling under a yawning budget deficit of 32 per cent of GDP and a public debt of \$18 billion piled up since the \$18 billion rebuilding process was launched after the 1975-

1990 civil war.

The U.S. financial company Merrill Lynch has urged the government to raise taxes, currently levied at just nine per cent of GDP, in its budget due by mid-March.

Merrill Lynch, which has handled much of the government's Eurobond issues since 1994, also urged faster privatisation of state-owned firms.

"The budget should

announced plans to raise state income by five per cent in the 1999 budget, as "there is no hope of reducing expenditures, because 80 per cent of the budget goes on debt servicing and salaries."

"First, we should improve tax collection as 70 per cent of the 245,000 tax payers do not declare their revenues and 72 per cent of companies declare losses," he said.

"We will also start progressively to introduce a value added taxation system and to abolish customs (60 per cent of revenues) to be able to join the World Trade Organisation and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership," he said.

Corm said privatisation, which will help the government fight the economic crisis, was feasible in Lebanon because state agencies are not numerous.

"There are no set agendas or dates but everything will be carried out in total transparency," said Corm who has a solid reputation as an economist.

Lebanon's annual growth

went down from seven per cent in 1994 to two per cent last year because about \$9 billion were frozen in deluxe properties and due to high annual interest rates on treasury bonds of between 16 and 22 per cent, he said.

Corm accused the successive governments of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri (1992-1998) of burdening the country with a "chronic budget deficit, waste of public funds and declarations of overestimated expenditures."

He said the country's debt has grown largely because of the expensive reconstruction policy carried out by Hariri, who was also the main drive behind the launch of Solidere, Lebanon's largest company.

Shares of Solidere, the real-estate joint-stock firm entrusted with rebuilding war-ravaged downtown Beirut, have been facing pressure since Hariri's departure last November.

TOKYO (AFP) — U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers has warned Japan's economy appears to be worsening and it must avoid deflation.

Summers told the National Press Club of Japan it was critical that Tokyo recognises

"the goal of price stability" includes "the responsibility to avoid deflation."

He said: "The government will need and appears determined to ensure the promised fiscal stimulus is fully implemented and sustained over the next few years."

But the boost delivered by Tokyo's economic rescue packages "should and I hope will be accommodated by monetary policy," said the senior U.S. financial official.

And it will be important to think creatively about the best use of all the tools of macroeconomic policy," he added.

Official figures showed Japan's consumer prices fell 0.5 per cent month-on-month in January.

For the Bank of Japan, Summers said, "I believe that monetary policy choices going forward can have quite consequential effects for economic performance."

Last month, the Central Bank of Japan, under intense lobbying from Tokyo to ease monetary policy, said it would guide the overnight call rate — at which banks lend to each other — to 0.15 per cent or lower, from 0.25 per cent.

But it rejected calls for more government bond purchases.

The Japanese government was alarmed at the rise in bond yields, which peaked on Feb. 3 at 2.440 per cent, the highest since June 1997, and the damage higher interest rates could wreak on business and banks.

Noting Tokyo's economic rescue efforts, Summers said "it has nonetheless been troubling that ... if anything the uncertainties facing the economy have increased and growth forecasts have been

revised further downward."

The senior U.S. official warned that global growth, aside from being tilted towards the risk of slowdown, was unbalanced with the United States running full tilt.

"United States imports from emerging Asia, for example, rose by close to \$12 billion last year, as compared with a nearly \$20 billion decline in Japanese imports from these countries," he said.

Washington would do everything possible to maintain growth, Summers promised. "But we cannot assume that the global economy will be able to fly permanently on a single engine."

Asked about the Japanese government's official forecast 0.5 per cent economic growth for the next fiscal year starting April 1, the deputy treasury secretary noted that most private forecasters expected contraction.

"I hope that perhaps the government's more optimistic forecast may reflect a conviction about policies that can be carried out of the course of the year ... that have not yet been announced," Summers said.

Such policy plans could not be reflected in private forecasts, he said.

But "my concern is great because I think it is an enormously important issue that Japan achieve economic growth."

"Certainly the available forecasts suggest that the establishment of a foundation for sustained growth on which can rely is a task that has not yet been fully completed," Summers added.

At a later meeting, Bank of Japan Governor Masaru Hayami told Summers the bank would refuse to buy new government bonds to help bring down long-term interest rates, a central bank official said.

"There was no request in the first place from Summers for the Bank of Japan's underwriting of new govern-

Jordan Times, Sunday, March 7, 1999

U.S. warns Japan to avoid deflation, shoulder burden of global growth

revamp its deficit-ridden fiscal finances by balancing key expenditures with revenues and stepping up structural reforms.

Japan should be then ready for a full-scale economic recovery in 10 years, the panel said.

Obuchi welcomed the panel's report and vowed to implement as many recommended measures as he could.

"The report I received today, 'Strategies for Reviving Japanese Economy,' outlines the direction and principles of medium- and long-term economic management," Obuchi said in the panel's meeting.

"I am receiving the report as precious advises and move ahead with my economic management," the premier said.

"I will tell each minister my intention as such when the report is submitted to the cabinet and encourage them to start with what they can implement," he added.

The report called for a "drastic turnaround" in the central bank's stance towards monetary policies to assist the recovery effort.

It proposed that the Bank of Japan takes "all possible measures" such as increased purchases of government bonds as part of the bank's daily market operations to halt excessive rises in long-term interest rates.

The central bank should keep its easy monetary policies to assist the economy's return to a growth path during this reform stage, the final report said.

Japan can target an annual economic growth of two per cent in the fiscal year to March 2002 by implementing the recommended reforms, it said.

In the final step, the panel expected the government to

Recovery in East Asia still 'very, very fragile' — World Bank official

TOKYO (AFP) — An economic recovery in East Asia is still "very, very fragile," even though another wave of financial turbulence is unlikely, a senior World Bank executive has said.

"Economic recovery is very, very fragile and one should avoid any complacency," said Jean-Michel Severino, the World Bank's vice president for Asia-Pacific.

"The task ahead is very important," he told a news conference in Tokyo.

"One is seeing some signs of economic recovery in the region and some sign that the external situation has stabilised," he said after three days of meetings in the Japanese capital with the bank's country directors from across the region.

Two crucial points, he noted, were the future of the Japanese economic situation and the prospects of growth in China.

This fragility, however, does not mean the countries rocked by the crisis in 1997 could face another wave of financial turbulence.

"This is unlikely but we are living in a very dangerous world as recent events in Russia and Brazil have demon-

strated and one has to stay extremely prudent," Severino said.

"The only insurance for those countries is the depth and the boldness of their structural reform programmes," he said. "They have started well in many countries but a lot remains to be done and we are encouraging the countries to focus on their programmes."

Severino noted the importance of restructuring the financial and industrial sectors, as well as following "good macroeconomic policies."

He also insisted on the need to improve social safety nets as a way of coming out of the crisis.

The director for Thailand, Jayasankar Shivakumar, for example, said: "Indicators show that the recession has bottomed out but that recovery has yet to happen."

There would be "very small growth this year but when exactly recovery will pick up is very difficult to assess," he added.

In South Korea, "confidence has been returning," said the country director M.G. Sriram Aiyer. But he admitted: "The real economy restructuring has only begun."

"It's true that investors do not think that by and large, Asia's difficulties are over yet," Lehrer told a news conference here coinciding with an international business forum.

"People don't think it's over now. But the great majority of investors, almost everyone, thinks it will be over by the middle of next year," he said.

Meanwhile, the findings of an Asia Society poll of investors showed that Asia's financial crisis will continue until the middle of next year.

But the survey of Asian and U.S. investors also found the crisis presented good investment opportunities, said the society, a non-profit institution dedicated to fostering ties between Americans and the Asia Pacific.

Partial results of the Asia Society survey showed the "question of recovery is still foremost in most people's mind," said Urban Lehrer, executive editor of the Asian Wall Street Journal, which cosponsored the poll.

There would be "very small growth this year but when exactly recovery will pick up is very difficult to assess," he added.

In South Korea, "confidence has been returning," said the country director M.G. Sriram Aiyer. But he admitted: "The real economy restructuring has only begun."

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Unemployment across Latin America in 1999 is likely to rise to record levels due to a regional economic recession, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has said.

In a report released here the ILO estimates that unemployment in 1999 will reach a record 9.5 per cent — shattering the previous unemployment record of 8.7 per cent set in 1983.

In 1998, regional unemployment was at 8.4 per cent, up from 7.2 per cent in 1997, according to the report.

Latin economies need to grow at an annual rate of between five and six per cent to absorb the regional labour pool. But this is an unachievable short-term goal, accord-

ing to the report.

Instead, economic policies in many Latin nations that prioritise high interest rates and tight credit are likely to result in slow economic growth and fuel inflation in 1999, according to the report.

Economic recession in turn makes Latin America unattractive to foreign investors.

On average, in 1998 Latin economies grew 2.3 per cent, less than half the growth rate from 1997, according to the ILO.

ILO: Latin American unemployment to rise to record

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

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ACROSS

1 Rocky outcrop

4 Transfer image

9 Frown

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23 Just the Way

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3 Produce anew

4 Copenhagen

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5 Alaska's first

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Business & Finance

Daily Beat
A review of news from the Arabic Press

Three per cent growth rate for this year seen unrealistic

** COMMENTING ON the possibility of achieving a three per cent economic growth this year, the secretary general of the Jordanian Communist Party said there is no indicator to support that possibility and, until now, a number of indicators point to a probability of weak growth. Munir Hamarneh, the secretary general who is also a professor of economics at the University of Jordan, attributed his expectation of weak growth to weak investments in productive sectors, the existence of huge and continued trade deficit and the absence of a climate capable of lifting the country from the deepening recession.

Hamarneh saw the policies, affecting the volume of investments, "operating in an opposite direction as the rise in sales tax leads to higher production costs and, consequently, weakens the capabilities of our industries to compete." He indicated that the main element to achieve growth lies in instigating local demand which cannot materialise unless individual incomes are raised and internal investment opportunities become available by lowering interest rates on credits. "The present indicators confirm weak growth unless there are some surprises," Hamarneh concluded.

Economic analyst Mazen Marji described the talk about growth rates as "far from reality" saying that the "series of misleading and covering up on real data was continuing from one government to another." He expressed hope that capable officials would be brought to face realities in an indication that a three per cent

growth rate cannot be achieved. Marji said the highest growth rate expected for 1998 does not exceed 1.4 per cent even before taking into consideration the inflation rate which is more than four per cent and the population growth which is no less than 2.7 per cent.

The analyst casted doubt over the credibility of the Tarawneh government for announcing that the economic reform programme was completed and then announcing a new three-year programme described as "national." He went on to criticise the previous government for hinting that the Social Productivity Programme would be completed by soft loans from the World Bank and then "being surprised that the bank would only be financing refugee camps through high interest loans." Furthermore, Marji said, "the (Tarawneh) government did not take any precaution for an increase in trade deficit and thus placed itself at the mercy of external circumstances."

Marji explained that none of the local investment sectors was "moving" and that the volume of investments coming from abroad was weak. Stressing that the man on the street did not reap any of the fruits of peace he asked: "Where were will growth come from?"

Nabil Wahbeh, a senior banker at the Jordan National Bank, said talk about a three per cent growth rate is exaggerated. "I don't believe it reached one per cent last year," Wahbeh stressed (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Experts: Millennium bug may disrupt world trade

MANILA (Agencies) — There will be no falling planes and sinking ships but mass transport disruptions resulting from the Millennium bug computer glitch could severely affect world trade, experts have warned.

"The big issue here would be more on the lines of gridlock, meaning that for big shipping companies, they may not be able to ship from part of a specific country to another," said Deborah Schaibly of the U.S.-based Madamme Millennium Consulting Inc.

"The damage is going to take an entire range, whereby in some areas you may have minimal problems while in some the problems will be totally devastating," Schaibly told an international conference here.

Her company's clients include leading shipping companies engaged in coal and grain transport.

The expert said major transport infrastructure, especially in advanced economies, rely heavily on computer systems that plot routes, traffic and destinations.

While a majority of transport firms have begun putting in place contingency measures, "there is not enough time" to completely counter the problem, Schaibly said.

Ricardo Valderama, chief executive officer of a risk management consultancy in the United States, said project managers assigned by firms to terminate the so-called Millennium bug often complained of "limited amount of authority" in dealing with the problem.

It has been found that fewer than 14 per cent of all (such) projects in the United

States are completed on time, he said.

He advised companies to provide a "realistic range" of deadlines to arrive at solutions against the glitch, also known as Y2K, which will start impacting on older computer systems less than 10 months from now.

Schaibly said widespread fears that planes would fall off the skies and ships would be lost at sea due to computer glitch had no factual basis, stressing that there was a "very slim chance" of it happening.

"This is not realistic although it has shock value to it," she said. "Banks will not lose your money, planes will not fall off and ships will not be lost on high seas. There are going to be glitches and ups and downs along the way but that does not mean the world is coming to an end."

Older-generation computers are programmed to read only the last digits of date and may not be able to distinguish the year 1900 to 1990.

There have been widespread fears this could ultimately lead to massive disruptions on sensitive sectors including finance, transportation and even governments.

Schaibly said nothing should be left to chance, stressing that firms "need to make sure that their businesses are safe, their employees are safe."

She urged companies to plan ahead and give priority to issues concerning the problem and ensure that contingency measures are in place during system breakdowns arising from Y2K.

"If you lose one ship of coal that is one issue, but if

you lose a ship full of people is another one far greater than the first," she said.

"The real danger is that this will result to production slowdowns and gridlocks, economic losses and legal liabilities to companies" that failed to put in place measures to combat the problem, she added.

The chief organiser of the international conference on the problem said the total cost of tackling the Millennium bug, including legal fees resulting from lawsuits, is expected to mount to \$1.3 trillion.

Amahile Aguiluz, who also heads the Philippines' effort to address the Y2K bug, said global agencies should be put on alert to be ready to assist countries and sectors vulnerable to the bug.

Aguiluz said a U.S.-based computer consultancy agency, the Gartner Group, had estimated it would cost some \$600 billion to convert computer systems so they can overcome the bug.

Legal fees from lawsuits over the bug could rise to \$700 billion, he told a news conference here.

Aguiluz warned that even this figure was rapidly increasing as the cost of computer programmers charged with making computers Y2K-compliant had steadily risen ahead of the new Millennium.

Meanwhile, a U.S. Senate panel has warned that the year 2000 computer bug may set off civil unrest in poor countries, undermine economic growth in Asia, Latin America and Africa, and disrupt global trade in oil and other commodities.

It added that while there was a low probability of an accidental nuclear weapons launch, missile systems in

other countries could malfunction and terrorists taking advantage of weakened security, could strike next Jan. 1.

But Robert Bennett, chairman of the Senate's special committee on the computer problem, said U.S. intelligence services would be ready.

"The U.S. military may experience some minor disruptions, but its mission-critical, war-fighting capability will not be compromised," he told a news conference after releasing the panel's report.

The problem is that many computers as now configured cannot recognise the year 2000. If not fixed, many computers will read "00" as 1900. That could cause many computers to crash or malfunction come Jan. 1, 2000.

Within the United States, Y2K disruptions could be minimised, Bennett said.

The committee said the most serious computer problems would likely strike other countries next Jan. 1.

"There is a low to medium probability of terrorist exploitation of Y2K. However, we must remain vigilant in case some of our security systems malfunction," Bennett told senators at a closed-door briefing.

"There is a medium probability of economic disruptions that will lead to civil unrest in certain sectors of the world, particularly where their economies are already fragile or there is political uncertainty," he said.

There was a "high probability" of economic disruptions in Latin America, Africa and Asia, Bennett added.

The report singled out Japan, Mexico, China, Germany and Taiwan for failing nine months to two years behind schedule in preparing for the year 2000 bug. The committee also said that major oil producers Venezuela and Saudi Arabia were 12 to 18 months behind schedule.

"Disruption of flights and global trade between some areas and countries may occur," the report added.

The report said that "the committee has no data to suggest that the United States will experience nationwide social or economic collapse, but the committee believes that some disruptions will occur and that in some cases Y2K disruptions may be significant."

It said the U.S. health care system may be least prepared because rural and inner-city hospitals were at high risk of computer failures. The nation's Medicare system was in "serious trouble," it said.

The committee said that U.S. airports started preparations too late and that shipments of goods by sea could be disrupted because the maritime industry was running behind. A prolonged nationwide blackout was unlikely, although local and regional outages were possible, it said.

In case vital services were temporarily cut off, the committee said Americans should consider stocking up on bottled water, canned goods and other essentials, as they might to prepare for a winter storm lasting two to three days. The report said people should also keep copies of their financial records in case banks run into unforeseen problems.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A lunch date could lead to romance. If you're not in a relationship, get close to someone you'd like to start one with. It's a good afternoon to begin a group project. Try a bigger challenge than ever before. You need something like that to keep you interested.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 18) Make your major decisions as early as possible. Don't procrastinate. Later in the focus shifts to financial matters. It may seem like there's not enough money to do what you want. Remember that old line about necessity being the mother of invention? Necessity in pushing you to try new things. One of them will work.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 18) If your work's done, you might be able to travel this weekend. How about skiing at Tahoe, or perhaps the Swiss Alps? This won't happen if you've been goofing off. Put in the correction, and next time this condition comes around, it's off to the Alps for you. Meanwhile, back to work.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) A friend can help you solve a difficult problem this morning. Talk it over with one who's more predictable than you are. This person had had the same lifestyle for longer than you can remember. Your problem is that things in your life are changing. If you need a little stability, go to one who has a lot of it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Complete a project this morning. You'll make a good impression on an older person and increase the money coming in. This afternoon, you'll have more chance to socialise. That's also your best opportunity for romance. In fact, it may find you. It looks like your partner is in an aggressive mood. This could be interesting.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) Ask for what you want early this morning. Later, everything gets confusing. Your boss or teacher or parent will order you to do one thing, then expect you to have something else done at the same time. Don't you get frazzled too? Instead, help this person get organised. That will make both of your lives a lot easier.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) The morning starts out slow, but the days gets better. By afternoon, you should be doing pretty well. You'll be able to find just the right words, especially with loved ones and children. You'll also be firm and decisive, so watch what you say. You'll have to keep any agreements you make this evening.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) You could get a good opportunity this afternoon. If you have your budget figured out, you'll know how much you can afford to spend. Money is not necessarily tight, but it never hurts to spend it wisely. The time you spend planning earlier in this day will show up as money saved later.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Things will fall together this morning, and money might even fall into your pocket. It's not from winning the lottery. It's from work you've done recently. Celebrate at lunch with your favourite person. Choose a date who can teach you something. It looks like love and learning are linked right now.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your life should start moving faster around the middle of the day. It might seem like you have too much to do, but that's never stopped you before. You're probably finding it exciting. Don't forget to get the clients to sign on the dotted line. If you forget something today, the mistake could be an expensive one.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A problem you've been struggling with starts to ease around the middle of the day. The solution either becomes obvious, or you simply stop caring. Your interest shifts to romance tonight, and it's about time. You've done without it for long enough. Set up a dinner date. You and your sweetheart have a lot to talk about.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Spend the morning studying, so you can handle a difficult situation this afternoon. It's not as hard as it is confusing. You want to ask everyone else's opinion, but you need to make sure your own interests are protected. You tend to do what everybody else wants. That's admirable, but not really necessary.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

Giant mergers may startle, but big isn't necessarily bad

NEW YORK (AP) — A few years ago, a merger of Exxon and Mobil might have seemed as unlikely as, say, a professional wrestler being elected governor.

Now eye-popping mergers of giant corporate rivals are commonplace. But to anyone who fears that a handful of companies will soon take over the world, business experts say global competition is just too strong.

"As big as companies might seem today, actually the large companies are a smaller fraction of the market than they were 20 and 30 years ago," said Jeremy Siegel, professor of finance of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

The merger frenzy has swept through a variety of industries, with

many companies seeking to expand into the United States and developing Asian and European markets.

The quest for size and global reach has been accompanied by a focus on efficiency and cost-cutting as giant rivals combine and then slash their overlapping businesses and employees.

The oil industry, in particular, has seen huge mergers as companies look for areas to slash costs and boost profits amid a deep global slump in prices.

Financial institutions are combining in efforts to provide customers with a broad new array of services from checking accounts to insurance to investment advice.

Since a 1996 law freed local, long-distance and cable companies to pursue each other's businesses, phone

companies have been scrambling to merge. The result has been an array of mergers creating headlines as startling as Minnesota Gov. Jesse "The Body" Ventura, a former pro wrestler: namely deals between Exxon and Mobil, Daimler-Benz and Chrysler, America Online and Netscape Communications, Travellers and Citicorp, and NationsBank and BankAmerica.

"I've long since gotten over the thought that any deal should be unthinkable," said Herald Ritch, co-head of mergers and acquisitions at Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette.

Some companies are trying to restore past dominance and break into new markets.

AT&T is the best example, as the former long-distance monopoly has lost half its

share of that market since being broken up by the government in 1984.

AT&T is now trying furiously to crack into the local phone business and is buying cable giant Tele-Communications Inc. with a plan to one day deliver phone and Internet services through televisions.

While the combination of heavyweights might seem an unfair concentration of power, government regulators have determined that big deals do not necessarily create antitrust problems.

For instance, NationsBank was allowed to buy BankAmerica, WorldCom bought MCI, Boeing bought McDonnell Douglas.

But the Washington watchdogs have forced some companies to sell some of themselves if they would dominate specific markets.

Exxon and Mobil, for instance, will probably have to sell off gas stations and refineries in regions where, together, they would dominate the market.

In some cases, the deals have blocked deals entirely in less competitive industries.

In the past year and a half, regulators quashed proposed mergers between office-products retailers Staples and Office Depot, defence giants Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, and the nation's top four drug wholesalers.

With Wall Street reviving from its summer slumber and once again letting companies use their high-priced stocks as currency to acquire rivals, regulators will have to be prepared for a heavier onslaught.

From electrical utilities to entertainment companies, merger watchers say the boom will continue as long as the stock market remains strong. And in the wake of deals such as Daimler-Chrysler, British Petroleum-Amoco and Deutsche Bank-Bankers Trust, big names will be coming together on a global scale.

Henry Jacoby, a management professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, pointed to Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. media conglomerate and U.S. auto giants General Motors and Ford as companies that could be looking to strengthen their European operations.

"Let your imagination run," said MIT's Jacoby.

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World Indoor Athletics Championships

Fredericks scoops 200m gold in title chase

MAEBASHI (AFP) — Namibian sprinter Frankie Fredericks scooped the 200 metre gold at the World Indoor Athletics Championships on Saturday as he embarked on an end-of-career title chase.

31-year-old Fredericks led from start to finish to beat Obadele Thompson of Barbados and defending champion Kevin Little of the United States in 20.11sec.

Olympic pole vault champion Jean Galfione won his contest but there was mass confusion and American protests in the Maebashi Green Dome after he twice appeared to twice touch the bar during his winning jump.

Romania got a golden double when Ionela Tirlea won the women's 200 metres while Gabriela Szabo won the 1.500m. Szabo will also aim to win the 3.000m for a third time on Sunday.

Fredericks was making a rare appearance at the championships, though he has the indoor 200m world record of 19.92sec.

"At this time of my life I am just chasing titles. I am trying to wrack up as many as I can. It is near the end of my career and the titles are what you are remembered for."

Like Colin Jackson, who won the 60m hurdles on Friday, Fredericks is an under-achieving legend in his sport. Like the British hurdler, his only other major title was at the world outdoor championships in 1993.

Fredericks — has four Olympic and four world championship silver medals. But no-one has run as many legal sub-10sec runs.

"I will try to do the best I can at the World Championships and then it is important to get the gold medal at the African Games," he said.



Frankie Fredericks of Namibia, flanked by Barbados' Obadele Thompson (L, silver) and Kevin Little, of the U.S. (R, bronze), shows off the gold medal after winning the men's 200-metre run at the World Indoor Athletics Championships in Maebashi. Fredericks timed 20.10 seconds (Reuters photo).

But he is not yet sure to go to the Sydney Olympics. "I am going to take it one year at a time," he insisted.

France got its first title of the championships through Galfione but the pole vault

bar bad to wait for a jury verdict before claiming his gold.

Galfione touched the bar as he cleared 6.00m on his second attempt during his duel with American Jeff Hartwig for the title. The jury reviewed a video and said it was an accident, sparking an official us protest which was rejected.

There were jeers and boos from the crowd when a slow motion replay was played on the screen. At one stage it was accidentally announced that Galfione had been disqualified. The runway was closed for 10 minutes before Hartwig tried and failed at 6.00m.

Galfione also tried 6.05m, still uncertain whether his 6.00m jump would count.

Hartwig's 5.95m was a

new American record but he said: "The whole confusion took the crowd out of it, it took me out of it and I lost all momentum." He said the competition had been "disturbing."

Dany Ecker of Germany was third on 5.85m with defending champion Igor Potapovich of Kazakhstan equal fourth with Jose Manuel Arcos of Spain.

Galfione pleaded innocence and said the storm probably cost his attempt on 6.05m. "I touched the bar but there was no intention to help myself who must be beaten," Galfione insisted.

"But how can you beat the feeling of winning. Even the confusion and doubt about whether I put the bar back on my way down from the jump cannot dull my feeling elation," said the Frenchman.

Romania's Szabo ruthlessly won the women's 1.500 metres, surging on the final lap to win in a championship best time of 4min 03.23sec, ahead of

fellow Romanian Violeta Beclae-Székely and Lidia Chojecka of Poland.

But Szabo did not acknowledge Beclae-Székely nor take the time to congratulate compatriot Tirlea for winning the women's 200m.

"Athletics is about individuals not teams and countries," she said.

"Inside the stadium I do not think about my mother or my father nor my friends. I fight for a medal and everyone else is my enemy who must be beaten."

The performance may have been cold but the 25-year-old Romanian was impressive and she is determined to get the 3.000m on Sunday and beat the 10 year old world record in the event.

Vita Pavlysh of the Ukraine won the women's shot put with a championship record throw of 21.43m. Tatjana Kotova of Russia took the women's long jump with 6.86m.

Holyfield promises 3rd round win over Lewis

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Evander Holyfield Friday said he would knock out Lennox Lewis in the third round of their fight for the undisputed world heavyweight title, a vow he said was not a prediction, but a promise.

"It's not a prediction," said a supremely confident Holyfield, who was in Los Angeles to promote pay-per-view sales and appear on the tonight show that night.

"The weatherman predicts," he said. "I know I'm going to knock Lennox out."

the fight at storied Madison Square Garden will bring together the titles of boxing's three major sanctioning bodies for the first time since Riddick Bowe dumped the World Boxing Council (WBC) belt in a trash can on Dec. 14, 1992.

Holyfield, normally a model of humility, has never before promised to win in a particular round.

"The reason why I made that statement — I want people to know I'm so confident," said Holyfield, holder of the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation crowns.

"I've been doing this for 28 years and 17 weeks," he said. "I'm to the point where I know what I'm doing."

Holyfield, 36, brings a record of 36-3 with 25 knockouts. For 19 months in 1991 and 1992 he reigned as the undisputed champion before

losing to Bowe and beginning the fragmentation of the title.

Despite two victories over Mike Tyson and victories over the only two men to conquer him in the ring, Holyfield needs to beat Lewis to secure his place among such undisputed legends as Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and Tyson.

"I'm saying I'm going to knock Lennox Lewis out," Holyfield said. "I don't take anyone for granted. I trained. I trained hard. I'm better than I've ever been."

Lewis, 33, is the WBC champion. He brings a record of 34-1 with 27 knockouts to the fight.

The Jamaican-born Briton took a pre-fight poke at Holyfield when he called the Evangelical Christian a hypocrite in the wake of revelations that Holyfield has fathered nine children with six women.

"I'm not a hypocrite," Holyfield said. "A hypocrite is a person who quits. I have made mistakes."

"Just as I have to work hard to be the heavyweight champion of the world, I have to work just as hard to be the man God wants me to be."

Holyfield, by turns serious and jocular as he met the press on Friday — prior to taping the television show and then taking in the Los Angeles Lakers basketball game — said Lewis' remarks hadn't made the fight a personal grudge match.

But he was unwavering in his certainty that he would emerge from the

fight with the undisputed title.

"I'm not saying there's something wrong with his character," he said of Lewis. "He wants to win. He's going to fight hard. That's what's going to keep him in until the third round."

Holyfield declined to speculate on his schedule after the fight, although he acknowledged that Henry Akinwande would be due a bout after stepping aside for this one.

The man who will always be linked to Tyson as the victim of the infamous bite fight, also brushed off queries about Tyson's current legal woes.

The former world champion, jailed for assault over a Maryland traffic accident, Friday had two months added to his current sentence by the Indiana judge who presided over his 1992 rape conviction.

Judge Patricia Gifford found the Maryland incident was a violation of Tyson's parole for the rape conviction, for which he was served three years in prison.

"Mike has to handle his business and I have to handle mine," Holyfield said with a shake of his head. "I think I'll be better served in this fight if I just handle my business."

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Asia's fastest man gives award back

MAEBASHI (AFP) — Koji Ito, Asia's fastest man, on Saturday donated part of a \$10,000 prize from last year's Asian Games to the Thai host nation.

Ito gave \$10,000 from his most valuable athlete award to Thai charities after coming fifth in the 200 metres final at the world indoor championships here.

The 29-year-old Japanese sprinter, who won three golds at the Asian Games in Bangkok in December, twice set a new Asian record time in the heats in Maebashi, slowing it to 20.95sec.

In the final, won by Namibian superstar sprinter Frankie Fredericks, Ito clocked 20.95sec.

"My mind was in a panic. I pushed too much on the straight and the corner was so tight it was hard to negotiate," said Ito.

"I was more tense than at the Asian Games," said



France's Romain Mesnil in action during the men's pole vault final at the World Indoor Athletics Championships in Maebashi. Mesnil ended up in a joint fourth position together with Spain Jose Manuel Arcos, Kazakhstan Igor Potapovich and Germany Andrei Tsvetkov with 5.70 metres (Reuters photo).

the Japanese, who will also run 60 metres on Sunday. "I really did not want them to believe my performance at the Asian Games was just a fluke. Ito became the first Asian to clock 10.00sec over 100m at the Asian Games.

Mutola determined to win record 4th gold

MAEBASHI (AP) — She's already done it three times, but a record-breaking fourth would be sweeter still. "Going for a record-breaking win, for the fourth time, means a lot to me," Maria Mutola, the 1993, 1995 and 1997 champion in the women's indoor track 800 metres, said Saturday. If she wins the gold in the finals Sunday at the World Indoor Championships, she will be the first woman to win four track championship golds. "It's not that easy. There are a lot of people running good," she said. But she came a step closer by easily winning her semifinal at 2 minutes and 2.18 seconds, although that was slower than her best of 1:57.06. She said she was saving her best for the finals. "What's important is the finals," said the runner from Mozambique.

American Michelle di Muro-ave — who ran with Mutola in the semifinals and finished sixth — said she wished Mutola the best. "She's just a fantastic athlete," she said. "She's a very nice girl."

Going for the cash — a little extra incentive never hurt. The championships offer a bit of that with cash prizes for the medalists — \$50,000 for the gold; \$20,000 for the silver and \$10,000 for the bronze. The money is all courtesy of the International Amateur Athletic Federation. An athlete who breaks "the world" record receives \$100,000. Romanian Ionela Tirlea, who won the gold in the 200 metres, said she hadn't given the cash much thought. "But I will spend it," she said with a smile. American Deon Minor, who has a chance for a medal when he runs in the relay Sunday, the final day of the championships, said he hadn't thought much about the money either. "As far as the cash, I'm not thinking about that now. I just want to go out and make sure we make it to the finals," he said. "You have to take it one day at a time."

Volunteers are a crowd — although spectator attendance has been less than ideal at the championships, there are 700 volunteers from the local Maebashi community, far more than organisers had hoped for. But as in many big events, many of the volunteers aren't getting the experience they had hoped for — a chance to practice their English or see the athletes up close.

Ayako Akiba, a 21-year-old English major at college, said she had given directions maybe a couple of times in English so far. She has been so busy she has watched all the competition on TV at the monitors placed throughout the venue.

Between the restoration of his licence and his sentencing in Maryland, Tyson admitted he violated the parameters of his parole. The additional 60 days will run consecutively to Tyson's current sentence, which began February 5.

Although he was sentenced to one year imprisonment plus another year as a suspended sentence, Tyson, 32, anticipated a release this summer which would have allowed him to resume his disgraced career.

However, Tyson is in the midst of a 25-day stint in solitary confinement in the Montgomery County jail in Rockville, Maryland, following a prison incident in which he smashed a television set. The loss of reduced time for good behaviour plus Friday's two-month sentence figures to push back his potential release to no earlier than autumn.

The commission forced Tyson to undergo psychiatric evaluation, which further

publicly embarrassed the fallen champion. At his sentencing, an unlikely strategy. A successful appeal after his original "no contest" plea only would have gotten him a trial, and a conviction could have put him in jail for 20 years.

Tyson also claimed any jail time would cost him everything and that he needs to fight to pay off considerable financial debts. He also reiterated his apology to the victims, but to no avail.

Betweeen the restoration of his licence and his sentencing in Maryland, Tyson scored a fifth-round knockout of Francois Botha on January 16. Despite his myriad problems, he remains one of boxing's hardest punchers and biggest attractions.

The Nevada Athletic Commission initially had concerns over the Maryland incident when reissuing Tyson a licence in October. Tyson was suspended on July 9, 1997, 11 days after twice biting Evander Holyfield during a heavyweight title fight.

The commission forced Tyson to undergo psychiatric evaluation, which further

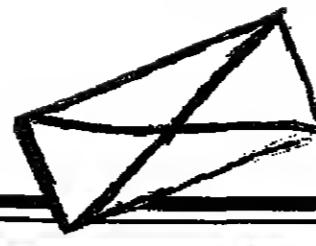
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Robert De Niro... in	Tom Hanks & Sally Field... in	Comedian Adel Imam... in	Adel Imam & Wafaa Amer... in	Eddie Murphy... in	Cameron Diaz... in	Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
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4th gold

Sports



LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Aridah holds talks in Tunisia

AMMAN — Isam Aridah, director of 9th Pan-Arab Games (Al Hussein Tournament) is currently in Tunisia inspecting preparations for the Mediterranean Games, which will be held in 2001 with 23 countries including Jordan taking part. Aridah briefed Tunisian Youth and Childhood Minister Mohammad Najjar on the Kingdom's preparations for Amman's Aug. 15-31 Pan-Arab Games and His Majesty King Abdullah's concern about the arrangements and new sport constructions currently under way. Najjar stressed his country's support to provide all available experience and support for the event's success.

Website for Al Hussein Tournament

AMMAN — In order to promote the 9th Pan-Arab Games (Al Hussein Tournament) and provide services to all parties concerned in its development, a website on the activity will be set up for that purpose. The Games' Public Relations Department will hold a meeting with a specialised company to discuss the issue.

Basketball officials off to Beirut

AMMAN — President of the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) Mudar Majdoub and Fadi Zeiqat, a member of the Orthodox Club's board of directors, leave for Lebanon to coordinate about the national team's participation in the West-Asian Clubs Championship to be hosted here by Al Orthodox. Majdoub said an official meeting with the secretary-general of the West-Asian Federation will take place in Beirut. The national team will also begin a seven-day training camp in Lebanon March 15 and play friendlies against a number of Lebanese teams.

Kick Boxing gets another JD7,000

AMMAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee decided to add JD7,000 to the JD27,000 budget requested by the National Kick-Boxing Federation to prepare the national team for the 9th Pan-Arab Games. The increase will enable the team to take part in training camps, upgrade players' skills and provide equipment.

Al Saeed to be nominated for prize

AMMAN — In commemoration of the late Nazmi Al Saeed, one of Jordan's sports pioneers who passed away last year, the national football and sports media federations will soon nominate Al Saeed for the annual prize of the Arab Soccer Federation for his 40-year services. Mohammad Jamil Abdul Qader, Mohammad Saad Shanciti, Bassam Haroun are also nominated for the award.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Williams opening-day winner at Evert Cup

INDIAN WELLS, California (AFP) — Fresh off her first tournament victory, Serena Williams of the United States exhibited her winning form Friday in opening-round action at the \$1.25 million Evert Cup.

Williams, who won her first career singles title Sunday at the Open Gaz de France, held off South African Jessica Steck 6-1, 7-5, in 67 minutes.

The 17-year-old Williams returned to her native California after taking part in an historic weekend.

After Serena beat Australian Open finalist Amelie Mauresmo in the final in Paris, older sister Venus won the 1998 Superthrift Tennis Classic in Oklahoma City as the two became the first sisters in WTA Tour history to win titles in the same week.

Serena is playing in just her fourth tournament of the year and improved to 9-2 with her victory over Steck, who was making only her second appearance in a WTA Tour main draw.

Next up for Williams is second seed and 1997 champion Lindsay Davenport of the United States.

Davenport, a finalist here a year ago, has not played since a quarter-final loss to Amanda Coetzer of South Africa at the Pan Pacific Open and has been battling a persistent head cold. She is 12-3 with a tournament win in Sydney.

In other matches on Friday, 10th-seeded Patty Schnyder of Switzerland, who had lost three of her previous four matches, defeated Tamarine Tanasugarn of Thailand, 6-3, 6-4, 13th seed and 1997 runner-up Irina Spirlea of Romania overcame Germany's Andrea Glass, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/4), 14th



GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNIA HIRSCH
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TECHNIQUE WINS

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH: ♠ A 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
♦ K Q 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
♥ Q J 8 5 4 3 2
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WEST: ♠ A 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
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♥ Q J 8 5 4 3 2
♣ A Q 7 6 5 4 3 2

EAST: ♠ A 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
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♥ Q J 8 5 4 3 2
♣ A Q 7 6 5 4 3 2

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♣ A Q 7 6 5 4 3 2

Opening lead: Three of ♠

The truly great players are not those who occasionally come up with a flashy line that makes the bridge column. They have the talent to make those plays, too, but the real proof of their ability is finding those elusive lines to secure seemingly simple contracts.

When this hand was played in a



McLaren driver Mika Hakkinen struggles to regain control of his car during the qualifying session at the Australian Grand Prix on the Albert Park circuit. Hakkinen, the defending world champion qualified fastest with teammate David Coulthard second, and Germany's Michael Schumacher in a Ferrari, third (Reuters photo)

Hakkinen swoops to deny Coulthard pole position

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Mika Hakkinen swooped at the death Saturday to snatch pole position from teammate David Coulthard for Sunday's season-opening Australian Formula One race here.

The world drivers' champion looked set to miss out when McLaren colleague Coulthard nipped in under his time leaving Hakkinen with only one lap to reply.

Showing the steel that made him world champion, the 30-year-old Finn hurtled around the 3.294-mile (5.202-kilometre) Albert Park street circuit in one minute 30.462 seconds.

That shaved 0.484 seconds off Coulthard's time after a combination of traffic backlog and time cost the gentlemanly Scot the opportunity of completing his last of 12 qualifying laps.

It was Hakkinen's second consecutive Melbourne pole and the 11th in his 113th GP start and McLaren's 93rd.

"I was lucky that I was able to start my fastest and final lap just before the flag dropped," said Hakkinen.

"It was a close fight with David and it's good to know that he will start the race alongside me from the front row.

"We have a comfortable gap, but that is qualifying and you never know what the race will bring."

Coulthard could barely hide his disappointment at having to sit and watch Hakkinen again take the honours after last year's controversial team arrangement requiring him to pull over two laps from home

while leading the Australian GP to allow Hakkinen to win.

"I was surprised that Mika managed another lap just before the flag came out to take pole from me at the very last moment and of course I am disappointed not to have been able to make use of my final lap due to traffic," said Coulthard.

McLaren, last season's champion team, will have both of their drivers on the front row of the grid, followed by Ferrari's Michael Schumacher (1:31.781) and Stewart Ford's Rubens Barrichello (1:32.148) on the second row.

It is the same first three on the grid as in last year's Australian GP, won by Hakkinen, on his way to winning his first drivers' championship.

The McLarens hold a minimum one-second advantage per lap on chief rivals Ferrari and barring any mishap during the 58-lap Melbourne race have a strong chance of coming away from Australia with maximum drivers' and constructors' points.

"It is good to be up at the front of the grid and I think our car is reliable and will be able to finish up near the front," said Frentzen.

Irvine conceded that it will be hard for Ferrari to match the tearaway McLarens.

"Because I have done so little running in the new car before the season, this weekend is something of a test session for me," said the Irishman.

Ferrari again experienced handling and set-up problems with Schumacher

downbeat about his chances of breaking through for his first Australian win at the ninth attempt.

"We have encountered some problems with our car, which we had not encountered during winter testing," the German said.

"We know which areas we have to work on before the next race to unlock the potential and we have concentrated on the car's reliability and that is a crucial factor for tomorrow's race."

Stewart Ford were ecstatic over Barrichello's place on the second row, with the Brazilian saying: "This is a fantastic start to the season and it goes some way towards proving that our times over the winter were legitimately quick ... we have a very good chance of finishing in the points."

"On the third row will be Jordan's Heinz-Harald Frentzen (1:32.276) and Ferrari's No.2 Eddie Irvine (1:32.289)."

"It is good to be up at the front of the grid and I think our car is reliable and will be able to finish up near the front," said Frentzen.

Irvine conceded that it will be hard for Ferrari to match the tearaway McLarens.

"Because I have done so little running in the new car before the season, this weekend is something of a test session for me," said the Irishman.

Agassi looks for 4th Scottsdale title

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Andre Agassi's run toward a fourth Scottsdale ATP Tour title continued Friday as he steamrolled Frenchman Cedric Pioline 6-4, 6-1 to reach the semi-finals.

Agassi, bidding for his second straight title here — the fourth of his career — continued his solid performances at one of his favourite venues, a desert spot similar to his home of Las Vegas.

"You get comfortable playing in certain places," said Agassi. "The crowd support has been wonderful."

The 28-year-old American was joined in the semi-finals by a pair of Australians at opposite ends of the tennis age spectrum.

Veteran Mark Woodforde and teenaged Lleyton Hewitt, both from the south Australian capital of Adelaide, each advanced into the final four.

The 33-year-old Woodforde earned a 7-6 (8/6), 4-6, 6-1 upset of sixth seed Goran Ivanisevic.

On Saturday he'll meet 18-year-old Hewitt, who advanced 6-1, 3-0 when ailing Frenchman Jerome Golmard retired.

"It was great out there today," said Hewitt, the World No. 91 who hasn't dropped a set all week. "In my mind, I felt like I couldn't miss a ball."

The teenager lost only

two points on serve in the abbreviated 35-minute match.

"I feel good," said Hewitt. "It will be a tough match. It's nice to get two Adelaide boys in the semi-finals. I'll hope to stay focused and play well, I'll take the matches one at a time."

Hewitt is appearing in his third career semifinal — and his first out of his hometown, where he won the Adelaide tour event in 1998 and went out in the final in January against Swede Thomas Enqvist.

Woodforde proved to be the stronger as he wore down Ivanisevic, whose big-serving game can let him down as often as it helps him.

Woodforde won the 10th meeting between the two left-handers after Ivanisevic had won four of the previous five encounters.

Woodforde's win guarantees an Australian in the final here for the third straight year.

Mark Philippoussis won the title in 1997, and Jason Stoltenberg played the final in 1998 against Agassi.

Woodforde and Ivanisevic have something of a history, with the Aussie losing an ill-tempered match at the U.S. Open, but earning revenge with a victory in Singapore a month later.

"I was solid against Goran, and kept him away from net," said

Woodforde, ranked 65th.

"I'm looking forward to playing Lleyton, it will be a totally different match from today."

"He beat me in Adelaide in the second round, so there's a bit of revenge involved."

Agassi's form has been impeccable, with the former World No. 1 dropping only 11 games in his last three matches.

In his last meeting with Pioline, a two-time Grand Slam finalist, Agassi handed the Frenchman his first career 6-0, 6-0 defeat.

In their only other meeting, Agassi won 6-4, 6-2 in the fourth round at key Biscayne in March, 1994.

"If I'm playing well, I feel like I'm in control and comfortable," Agassi said.

The Las Vegas right-hander improved his Scottsdale record to 19-3 and has reached the semi-finals for the fourth time.

Each time Agassi has made it past the second round at the event, he has won it.

SCOREBOARD

Belgian League			
Boston	102	Denver	94
Golden State	102	Indiana	83
Miami	89	Phil.	78
Washington	86	Charlotte	85
Orlando	89	Toronto	84
Milwaukee	88	N. York	87
Portland	106	Dallas	95
LA Lakers	103	Minn.	85
		Seattle	100
Standard Liege 2		Mouscron 0	
English League			
Cardiff	0	Chester	0
Dutch League			
Auxerre	0	Sochaux	1
French League Cup		German League	
Msv Duisburg	4	H. Rostock	1
Nuremberg	3	Sch. 04	0

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Cohen meets with King Fahd on second leg of Mideast tour

RIYADH (R) — Defence Secretary William Cohen, moving to solidify Gulf security against Iraq, held talks with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd Saturday and said the United States would sell very sophisticated "AMRAAM" air-to-air missiles to Bahrain.

Fahd told Cohen, here on the second leg of a nine-country Gulf and Middle East trip, that he supported the "strong partnership" between Riyadh and Washington, a senior U.S. defence official said.

More than 5,000 U.S. troops and dozens of warplanes are based in Saudi Arabia and the jets have been used almost daily in the past two months to launch strikes on Iraq's southern no-fly zone in response to anti-aircraft fire.

"He [King Fahd] said it was our duty and pleasure to provide help and support to the United States and that we have very strong mutual interests," the U.S. official told reporters travelling with Cohen.

The official said Cohen's second meeting with King Fahd in three months lasted about 20 minutes at a royal farm north of Riyadh and that the discussion was in general terms about the U.S.-Saudi relationship and did not go into details about Iraq.

The defence secretary flew to Riyadh from Bahrain as part of a whirlwind, six-nation tour of the Gulf to improve long-term security against Iraq and Iran. He will press U.S. interest in Middle East peace during additional stops in Jordan, Egypt and Israel later this week.

Earlier Saturday, Cohen had

held talks with Bahrain's emir just minutes before the ruler collapsed and died of a heart seizure. On hearing the news the defence secretary told reporters he was "sunited and saddened."

Cohen was to hold talks with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan and Crown Prince Abdullah Sunday before going on to Oman.

In Bahrain, Cohen announced that the United States would sell AIM-120B advanced, medium-range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAM) to Bahrain for its American-made F-16 jets.

Israel already has such missiles and the United States has approved their sale to the United Arab Emirates.

U.S. officials said Bahrain planned to buy 27 of the missiles, which are made by Raytheon Co. and cost \$386,000 each. But the officials said the package would also include expensive training and other costs. The first missiles are not expected to be delivered for three years.

Plots are able to fire the highly sophisticated AMRAAM, then "forget" the weapon as it seeks and destroys enemy aircraft at ranges of more than 80 kilometers. The exact range is classified.

"I want everybody to know that the United States is a steady friend, determined to maintain our good relations in the region," Cohen told reporters in a statement after meeting with officials of Bahrain, a small, oil-rich Gulf state which had sought the mis-

siles.

Cohen told reporters he had informed Bahrain's leaders that the Clinton administration quietly told Congress on Feb. 22 that it intended to sell the arms to Bahrain.

"The U.S. is grateful for strong support that Bahrain provides our navy," Cohen stressed, noting that Bahrain is home port to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet in the Gulf. He added that the defence departments of the two countries were establishing a special telephone line to facilitate direct security communications.

Cohen cancelled a departure press conference planned at Manama's airport because of Sheikh Isa's death, but said in a written statement that his talks with Bahrain's leaders had covered issues including "our shared determination to fight terrorism and the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction in Iran and Iraq."

Cohen reiterated that air strikes against Iraq would continue as long as Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein continued to violate no-fly zones and break the containment strategy.

Recently, Iraq has been trying to shoot down coalition aircraft that are patrolling the no-fly zones. The zones are part of the containment policy designed to keep Iraq from attacking its own people or its neighbours.

"In response to these threats, coalition aircraft have fired back in self-defence. Our aircraft will continue to target Iraq's air defence system as long as Iraq uses that system to challenge our planes," he said.

SAY CHEESE: Indian chief Willy of the Huli tribe from Papua New Guinea, right, watches a snapshot from himself Saturday on the display of a digital camera taken by an unidentified exhibitor, left, at the International Tourism Fair in Berlin. Around 7,400 exhibitors from 190 countries take part in the world's biggest tourism event of its kind, which runs until March 10 (AP photo)

Hoss rejects talks on Israeli pullout terms

BEIRUT (R) — Prime Minister Salim Hoss said on Saturday Lebanon would not consider any Israeli conditions for ending its military occupation of the south.

"Our position is firm and will not change. Lebanon is not ready to discuss any security arrangements or guarantees for an Israeli pullout," Hoss told the official national news agency.

"Resolution 425 is clear and demands an unconditional and complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon territories," he said, referring to a 21-year-old U.N. resolution.

Hoss said he had told the British Broadcasting

Corporation (BBC) in an interview aired on Friday that an Israeli withdrawal from the south would activate a 1949 armistice agreement between Lebanon and the Jewish state, which are officially at war.

"What I want to say, quite simply, was that the required Israeli pullout would restore Lebanon's sovereignty over the occupied territories and revive the armistice. Any other interpretations to what I said are untrue," he explained.

Hoss' office complained earlier that the BBC had broadcast his comments in an incomplete form which could be misunderstood.

A transcript was not immediately available from the BBC.

Israel has occupied parts of south Lebanon since 1978. It set up a 15-km deep "security" zone there in 1985, ostensibly to protect its borders from potential guerrilla attacks.

Pro-Iranian Hezbollah (Party of God) and other groups are fighting to evict Israeli troops from the area.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel could redeploy the 1,000 soldiers stationed in the zone if the Lebanese government provides security guarantees.

On Saturday, Netanyahu told reporters in Jerusalem

that Israel could not pull out because "the government of Lebanon has not been prepared to control the southern parts... and prevent attacks against the north of Israel."

"If there is a willingness on the part of the government of Lebanon to arrive at such security arrangements they can find in the government of Israel a willing partner to arrive at such security arrangements," Netanyahu added.

Beirut and Damascus, the main power broker in Lebanon with 35,000 troops stationed there, have previously rejected the offer, demanding Israel implement the U.N. resolution.

Captain of U.S. warship attacked by Israel dies

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Retired U.S. Navy Capt. William L. McGonagle, who received the Medal of Honour for heroism as skipper of the USS Liberty when Israel unleashed a deadly attack on the intelligence-gathering ship in 1967, has died. He was 73.

McGonagle died Wednesday in Palm Springs, where he lived, said Donald Pageler, editor of the Liberty News, a newsletter of the ship's survivors' association. He did not know the cause of death.

Thirty-four crewmen were killed and 171 were wounded when the Liberty was attacked by Israeli air force planes and torpedo boats in international waters north of Sinai during the 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

The ship was bombed with napalm, torpedoes and shelled.

The attack, blamed on a mistaken identification of the Liberty as an Egyptian ship, remains one of the most controversial events in U.S.-Israel relations and led to allegations of a cover-up by the governments that persist to the present day.

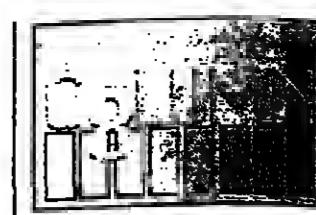
McGonagle, who was severely wounded but stayed

in command on the bridge through the battle and for many hours afterward, broke his silence years later and joined former shipmates in demanding the two governments release all details of the attack.

"I think it's about time that the state of Israel and the United States government provide the crew members of the Liberty and the rest of the American people the facts of what happened, and why... the Liberty was attacked 30 years ago today," McGonagle said during a 1997 reunion of Liberty survivors in Washington.

"For many years I have wanted to believe that the attack on the Liberty was a pure error," McGonagle said. "But it appears to me that it was not a pure case of mistaken identity. It was, on the other hand, gross incompetence and aggravated dereliction of duty on the part of many officers and men of the state of Israel," he said.

Israel apologised to the United States but claimed there had been a misidentification and that the ship's markings were inadequate. Israel paid more than \$12 million in compensation.



Town hands down musical punishments

FORT LUPTON (AP) — They don't take requests at this after-hours club and there's definitely no karaoke. The DJ is a police officer, and he's ready to bounce anyone who dances or talks. Municipal Judge Paul Sacco requires people convicted of violating the city's noise ordinance to listen to music they don't like. The offenders are mostly young, so there is a heavy dose of lounge music, including Wayne Newton and Dean Martin, plus some Navajo flute music, bagpipes and John Denver songs. During the most recent session, the group of seven heard one of the judge's own jazz compositions, "I'm Sleeping in My Car." The worst selection was the "Barney" theme song, said Ryan Bowles, 21, adding, "If you laugh they cite you for contempt."

Man's car marriage attempt rejected

KNOXVILLE (AP) — Many men have had love affairs with their cars. Buster Mitchell wanted to make it official. Filled by his girlfriend, a beret Mitchell decided he wanted to marry his true love — his 1996 Mustang GT. "I've been broken-hearted and hung out to dry, so I am going to the courthouse and try to marry my car," Mitchell said before attempting to get a marriage licence. Mitchell, 28, didn't get very far in the application before the clerk dashed his dreams. It was sometime after he listed his fiance's birthplace as "Detroit," her father as "Henry Ford" and her blood type as "10-W-40" that his plans sputtered.

Spared veteran gets ID back

MULHOUSE (R) — An astonished German war veteran was handed back his army identification booklet by the enemy soldier who took it instead of shooting him in the final days of WWII. The document was returned to Albert Pollkotter, 79, of Neubekum, by Eugene Meyer, 77, who spared his life in a tense encounter in the Netherlands in April 1945 after an older German soldier broke into tears, speaking of his children. "I spared his life mainly because my comrade Jean Graziani said: 'Don't be an ass and bump them off, the war's nearly over,'" Meyer told reporters in the offices of the newspaper *L'Alsace*, which helped organise the reunion.

Rio moves to eradicate pit bulls

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Pit bulls could soon become a thing of the past in Rio. A proposed law would sterilise all male pit bulls, while females would be seized and euthanised. The law is backed by Rio's Commission for the Protection and Defence of Animals, an association of city legislators and animal rights groups. Owners of male pit bulls who fail to have their dogs registered and sterilised within 180 days would face fines of up to 488 reals, or \$24. The idea gained support after a string of high-profile attacks by pit bulls, including a near-fatal attack on a six-year-old boy.

High-tech panda shelter unveiled

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong is pulling out all the stops to provide the best accommodation for a pair of special guests from mainland China: giant pandas Jia Jia and An An. Temperature-controlled gardens with sterilised soil and purified air, landscaped viewing pens, ultra-sound medical equipment, and Chinese bamboo flows in twice a week — all for little over \$10 million. For the two pandas, who will be arriving later this month from Sichuan province in western China, nothing can be too special — or costly. "We are doing the most we can to make the pandas feel comfortable and healthy," official Timothy N.

Chemical station safely restarted

Colombia chopper crashes in hunt for death squad

Saddam meets Arab League official

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has met a senior Arab League envoy who travelled to Iraq to persuade him to accept a committee formed to help remove U.N. sanctions imposed after the 1991 Gulf War, the Iraqi News Agency said Saturday.

Saddam rejected the committee formed at an Arab foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo in January because Iraq was not invited to join and because countries Iraq says were hostile to it in the war were included.

INA reported that Arab League Assistant Secretary General Ahmad Ben Hilli handed Saddam a letter from Arab League chief Esmael Abdul Meguid saying "all Arab people are with Iraq to face up to American aggression" and that the League "would exert all efforts to end the embargo."

This is the first time Saddam has agreed to meet an Arab League official to discuss the committee.

The group's first meeting, which was scheduled for Sunday in Damascus, has been postponed indefinitely, officials in the Syrian capital said.

They said the postponement was made at the request of some of the committee's seven members who wanted time for more consultations.

Rebels kill six in Algeria — official 'Singer's murderer killed'

ALGIERS (R) — Rebels killed six civilians, including two children, in a forest in western Algeria on Saturday, government security forces said.

The security forces, in a statement read on state radio, said three civilians were also wounded in the rebel attack in Oued Romane forest near Ouled Boudouma hamlet in Chlef province, 160 km west of Algiers.

The victims were caught in a surprise attack carried out by "terrorists," they added, using the official term used by the authorities for Islamist guerrillas.

The security forces gave no further details on the attack but said troops launched a manhunt for the assailants.

Chief is one of Algeria's main hotbeds of violence. At least 50 villagers were killed by having their throats slashed in a rebel raid in Chlef in December, according to the government.

In another incident, Al Watan said on Saturday rebels attacked Sidi Ameur village in the western province of Mascara on Thursday, killing three shepherds and wounding two others.

Algerian government security forces shot dead a rebel leader suspected of taking part

with health problems associated with exposure to nuclear test fallout from the 67 U.S. tests at Bikini and Enewetak atolls in the 1940s and 1950s.

The study said that "increases in leukemia, breast cancer and thyroid cancer after radiation exposure have been well established, especially in childhood exposures."

The scientists, including Majuro's public health director Kennar Briand, analysed cancer rates in the United States compared with the Marshall Islands from 1985 to 1994.

"Cancer incidence rates were higher in virtually every category in the Marshall Islands compared with the United States for the period," their study said.

Lung cancer in the Marshalls was nearly four times more prevalent, cervical cancer rates were nearly six times higher and liver cancer incidence were 15 times higher in males and 40 times higher in females.

Another risk factor in the Marshall Islands is its high rate of malnutrition and the associated deficiency of Vitamin A, according to the study.

A 1994 study of Marshalls children aged from one to five showed that 62 per cent had severe Vitamin A deficiency by World Health Organisation standards, the study said.

Lack of the vitamin has been "highly associated" with lung, liver, cervical and bladder cancers, it said.

"Westernisation of the Marshall Islands brought social problems associated with urbanisation and breakdown of indigenous cultural values," it added. "There are high rates of alcohol abuse, smoking and sexually transmitted diseases."

But the true extent of cancer in the Pacific island nation could be grossly higher than reported because of "an underdeveloped health record-keeping system," the scientists warned.

"The data presented here represents a very conservative estimation of the true cancer incidence in the Marshall Islands," they said. "The finding of substantially higher cancer incidence rates in the Marshall Islands compared with the U.S. in virtually all categories studied, in view of the aforementioned under-ascertainment of cases, is alarming."